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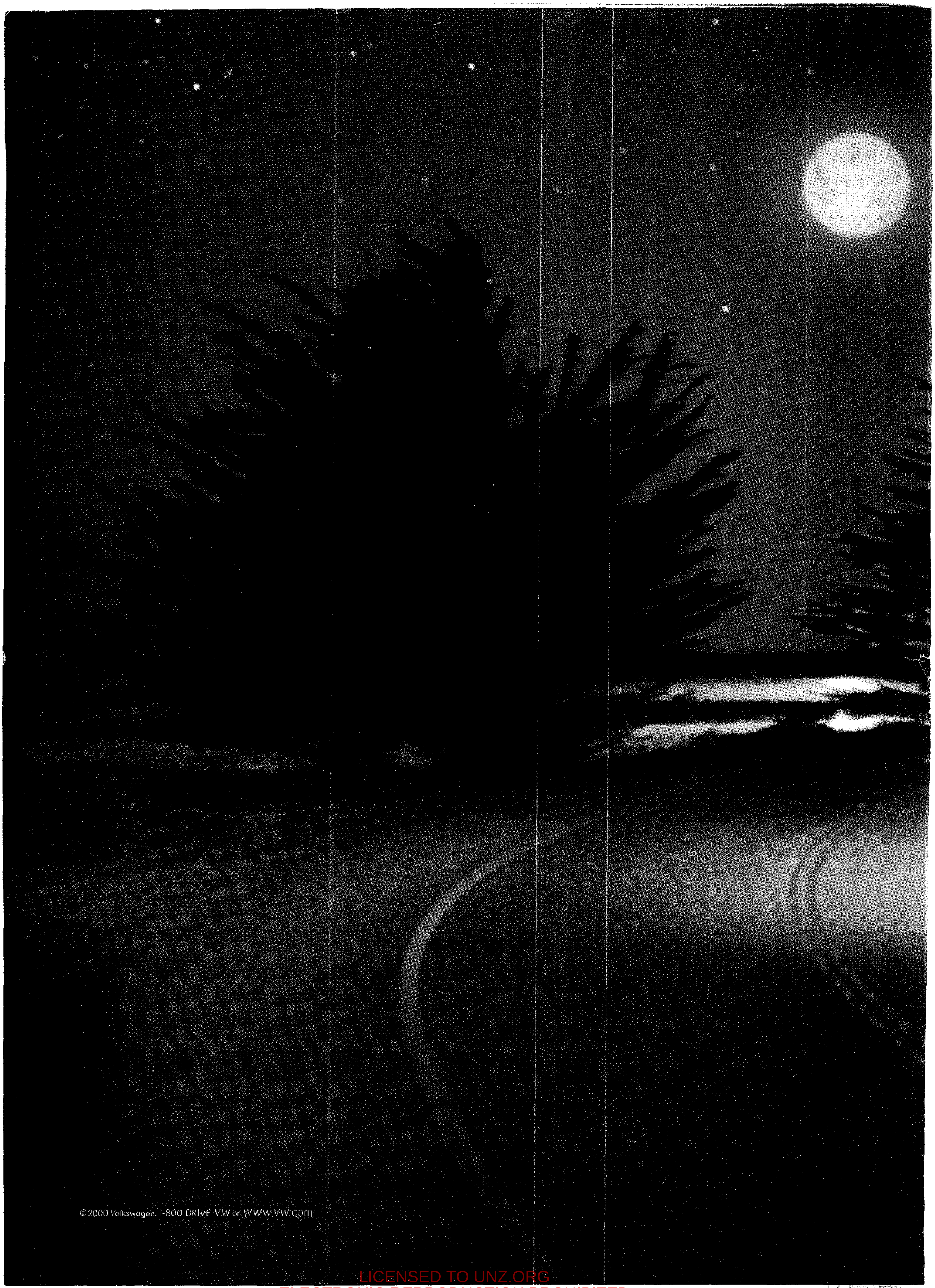

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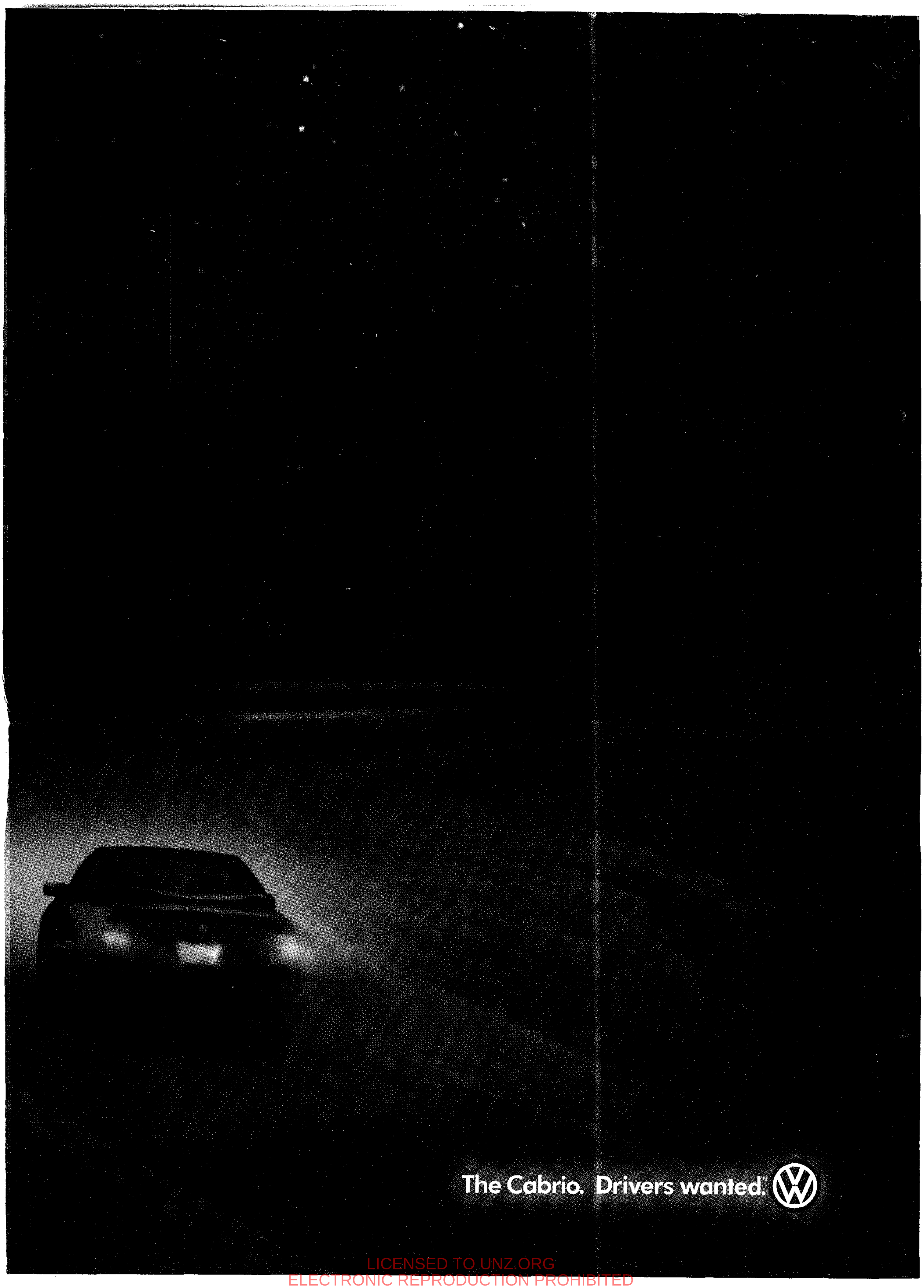
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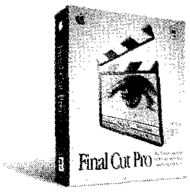

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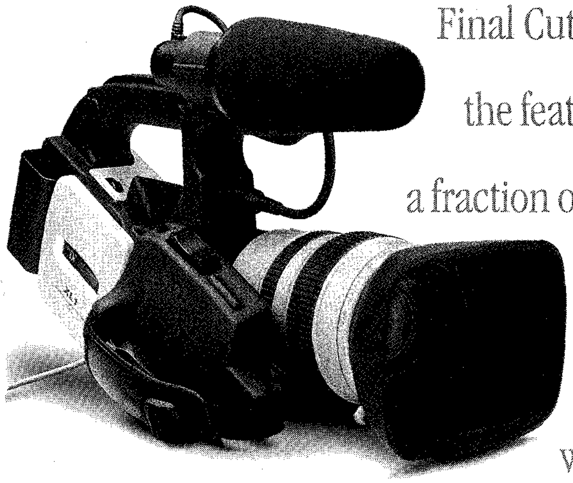

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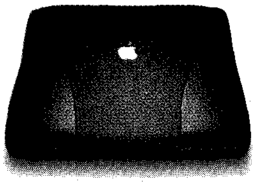

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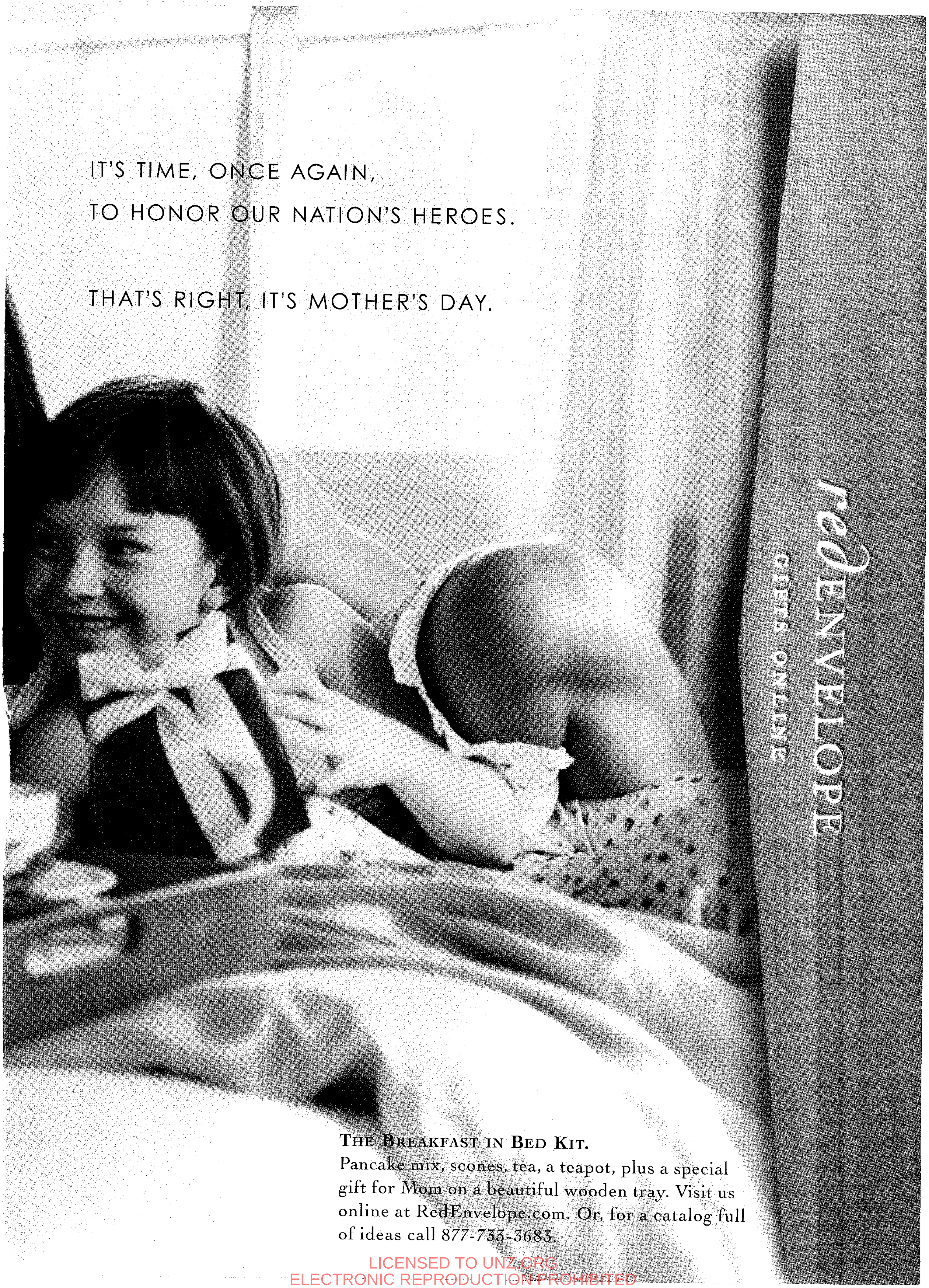
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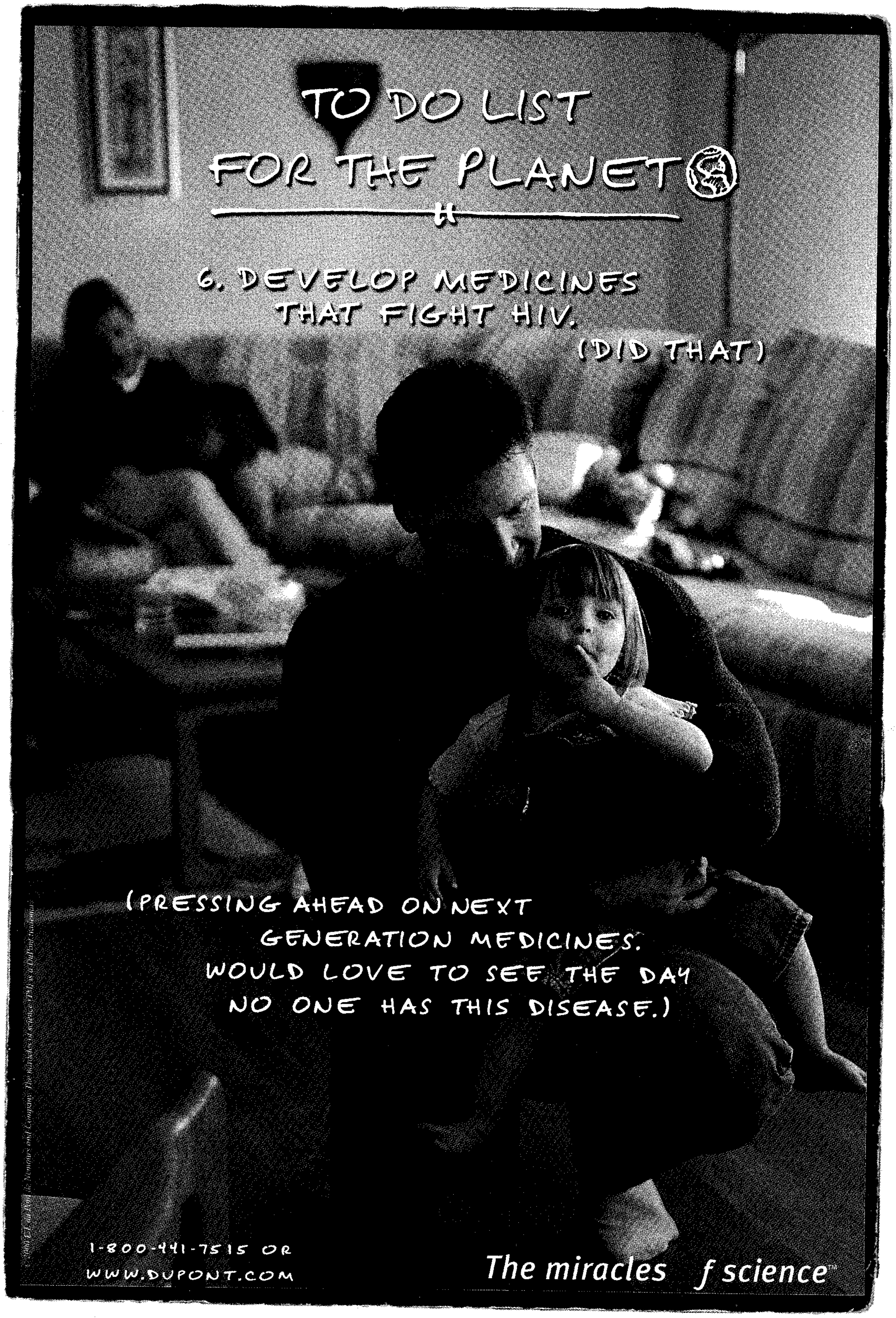
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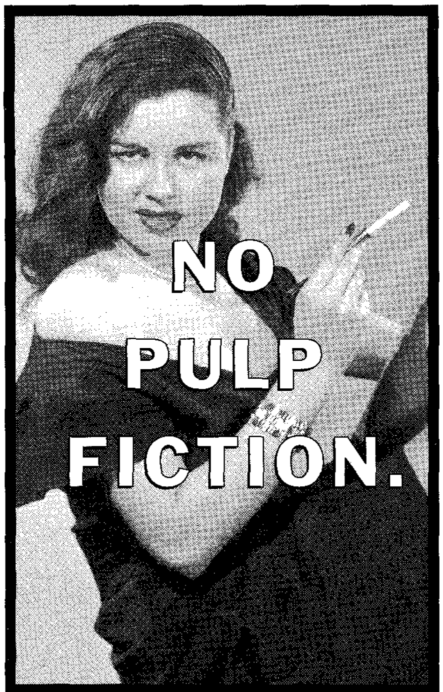

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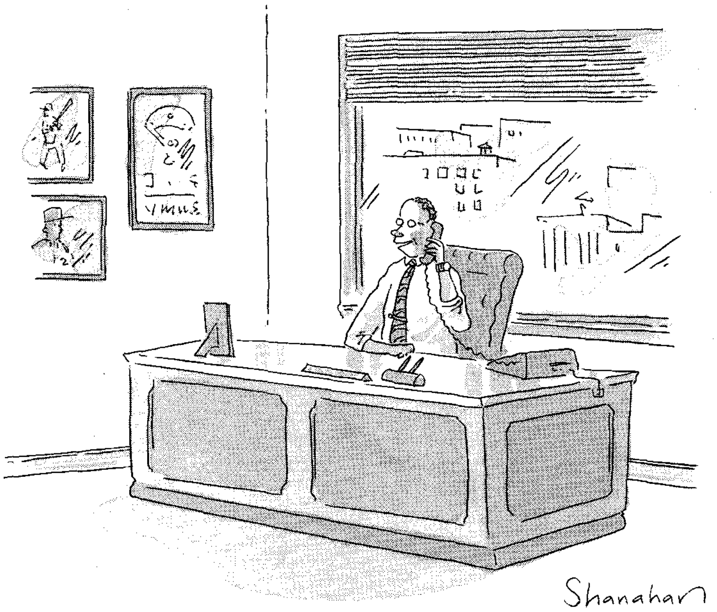

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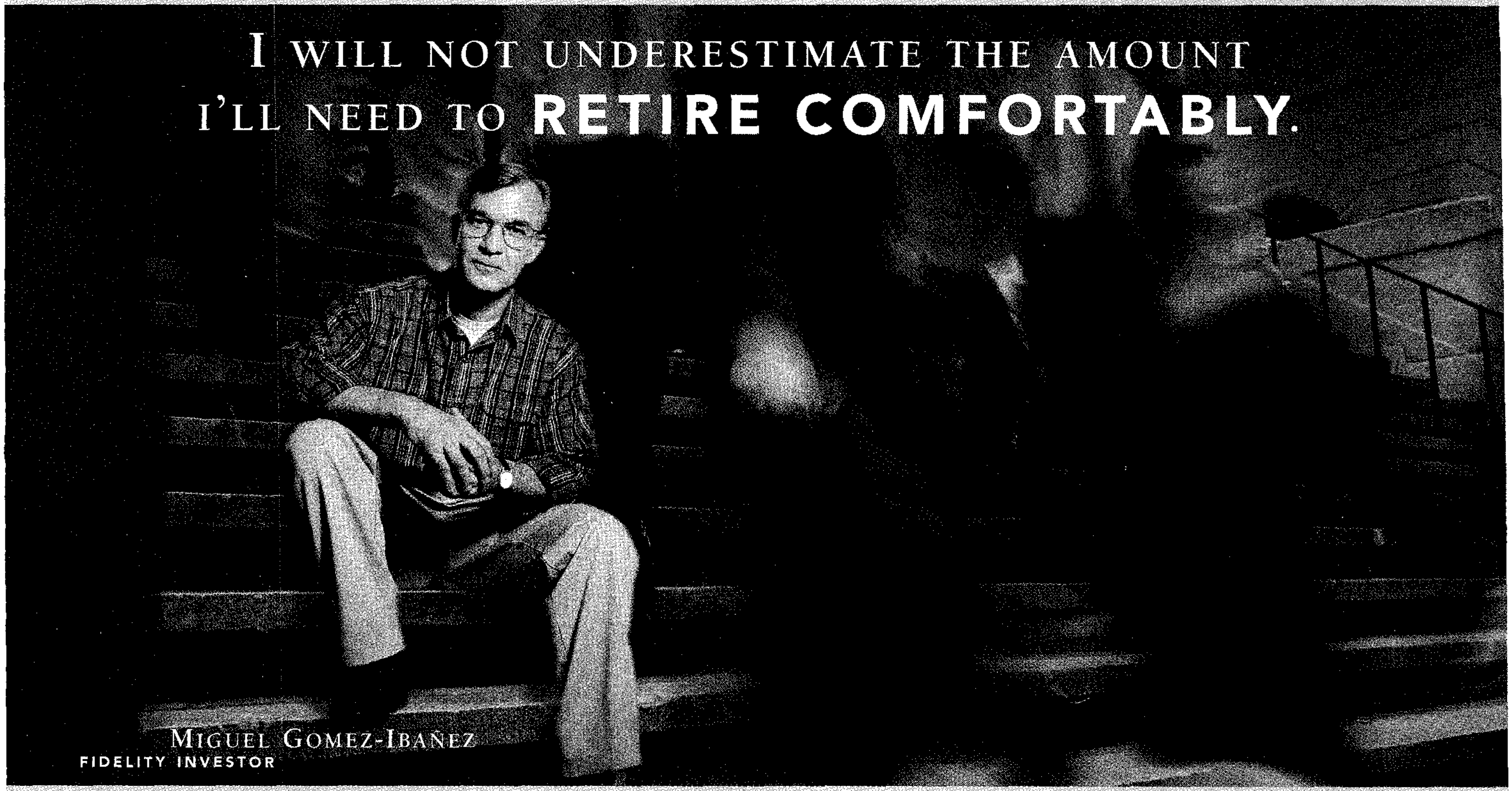
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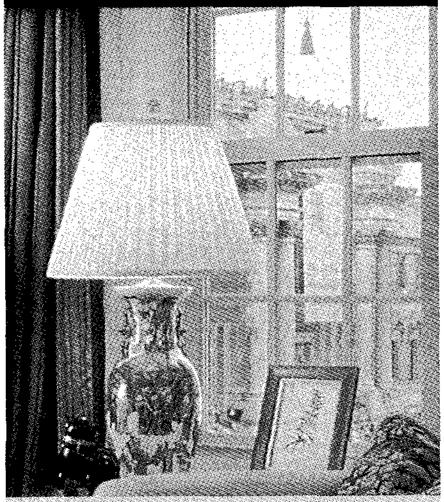

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THE MAIL

IN PRAISE OF THE POST

The underlying thesis of Jeffrey Toobin's piece on Donald Graham and the Washington *Post* (Annals of Journalism, March 20th) is that by not trying to emulate and "challenge" the New York *Times* the *Post* has somehow shirked its responsibilities. But to whom? Certainly not to the readers in the Washington market. As Toobin points out, the *Post* reaches the highest percentage of households in its market of any major metropolitan newspaper in the country. As good as the *Times* is, it has a far different, and easier, editorial mission than the *Post*. The *Times* can target a relatively narrow slice of readers, composed largely of academics, government officials, artists and intellectuals, journalists, and upper-income executives, in the New York area and nationally. The *Post*, in contrast, is an important paper because of its location, but it is, and must be, a local paper. A more apt comparison could have been made between the *Post* and the Los Angeles *Times*. Over the past twenty years, the *Post's* Don Graham didn't go after Baltimore the way the *Times* went after San Diego; nor did he diversify into a stable of marginal special-interest magazines or acquire a host of other businesses that diverted management attention and focus. And, unlike Los Angeles, Washington will continue to have a local, family-controlled newspaper for years to come.

Philip J. Meek
Greenwich, Conn.

DON'T ENTERTAIN US

In his March 20th Talk of the Town story comparing the Presidential primary winners and losers, Joe Klein writes that "unfortunately . . . spontaneity is dangerous." But I was reassured by the pragmatists' beating the romantics. In any case, the media and the electorate have created these candidates: for every thirty-minute campaign speech, the twenty-eight minutes spent on ideas are left on the cutting-room floor, while the two-minute attack is seen by millions of viewers. In the months until November, the press will find no end of trivia and ephemera to entertain us with. Rather than wishing that the candidates would join the divertissement, let's let them be stolid, boring—and Presidential. We can then choose one based on his ability to govern rather than on his ability to entertain.

David L. Buchanan
Salem, Oreg.

SURVIVING THE CRASH

In "The Last Floor Show" (March 20th) Elizabeth Kolbert suggested that the New York Stock Exchange and its human-based auction system of trading are "anachronistic" and perhaps "obsolete." She may be right, but she did not adequately discuss the advantages of the exchange's specialist system. As an institutional broker who uses both specialists and other, direct electronic order systems on a daily basis, I know that there is no comparison between the two on day-to-day orders, let alone during market turmoil. Many neophyte investors believe that they'll be able to sell their stock in a market crisis simply by entering an order on one of the electronic trading networks. But you cannot sell (or buy, for that matter) in a vacuum. If no buyer shows up in the electronic marketplace, to whom will they sell? The N.Y.S.E.'s specialists, on the other hand, must make an effort to maintain an orderly market, and must buy stocks themselves if imbalances are not resolved. I believe that the current mania in the markets will end badly in general, but it will be catastrophe for the great majority of unsophisticated investors who believe the electronic marketplace is nirvana.

Steven Morris
Greenwich, Conn.

•

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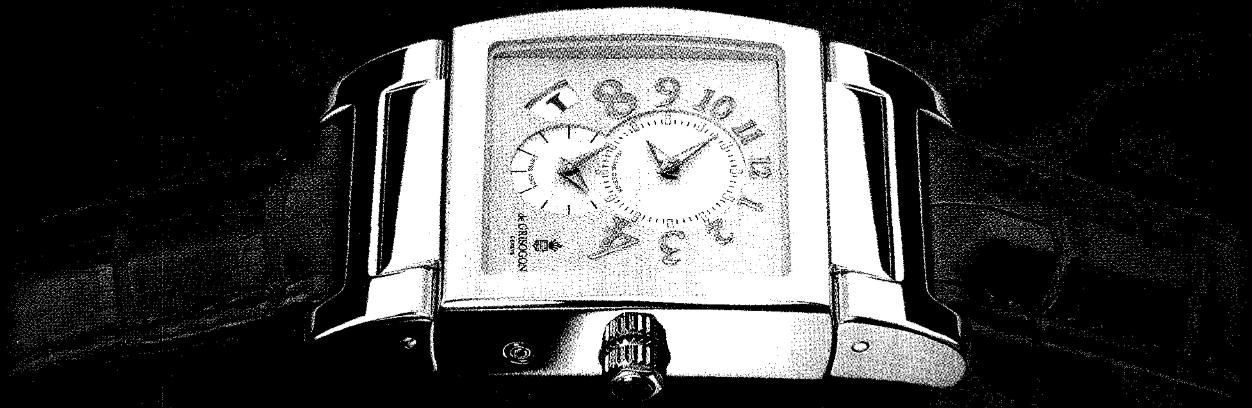
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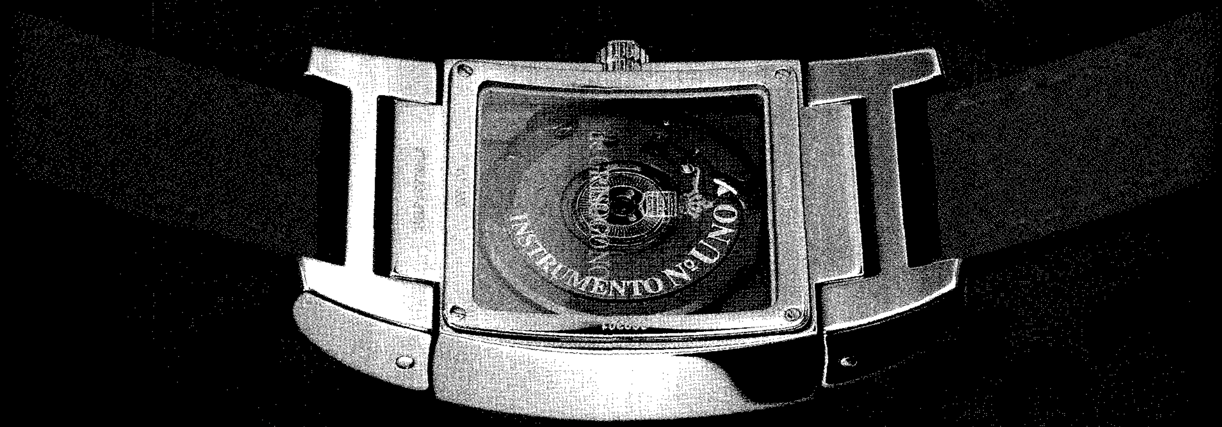
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OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

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BLOOD ON THE DINING ROOM FLOOR
The WPA Theatre presents a musical based on Gertrude Stein's murder mystery, by Jonathan Sheffer. In previews through April 15. Opens April 16 at 7. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

THE GREEN BIRD
The director Julie Taymor brings Carlo Gozzi's fairy tale to the stage with puppets, masks, and live performers. The music is by Elliot Goldenthal. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical, based on the last days in the life of you know who. Gale Edwards is the director. In previews through April 15. Opens April 16 at 6:45. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's first play, set in 1977, about the lives of a group of Pittsburgh gypsy-cab drivers. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE MUSIC MAN
Craig Bierko is Professor Harold Hill, and Rebecca Luker is Marian the Librarian, in a revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical. Susan Stroman is the director. In previews. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

OUR LADY OF SLIGO
Sinéad Cusack has the leading role in Sebastian Barry's latest drama, under the direction of Max Stafford-Clark. In previews. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

THE REAL THING
From London, a Donmar Warehouse staging of Tom Stoppard's 1984 play, directed by David Leveaux. In previews through April 16. Opens April 17 at 6:30. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

ROSE
Olympia Dukakis has the title role in a new play by Martin Sherman, which traces a Jewish woman's life, from her childhood in Russia to the Warsaw ghettos to Miami Beach. Nancy Meckler is the director. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

TALLER THAN A DWARF
From the pen of Elaine May, a new comedy starring Matthew Broderick and Parker Posey and directed by Alan Arkin. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

THE WILD PARTY
Joseph Moncure March's Jazz Age poem is the basis for Michael John LaChiusa and George C. Wolfe's new musical, starring Mandy Patinkin, Eartha Kitt, and Toni Collette. Mr. Wolfe is the director. Two previews on April 12. Opens April 13 at 7. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

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OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
Disney's musical, based on the Verdi opera, starring Heather Headley. With music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice, and a book by Linda Woolverton and David Henry Hwang. Robert Falls is the director. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

AMADEUS
From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

AMERICAN BUFFALO
In the Atlantic Theatre Company's lucid but uninspired staging of David Mamet's great 1975 play, the actors' chemistry never quite fills out the humiliated hearts of their characters—a junk-shop owner named Don (Philip Baker Hall), his young junkie gofer (the poignant, baby-faced Mark Webber), and Teach (the expert William H. Macy), a petty criminal who kisses himself in on a scam to steal back a nickel for which some dealer has paid Don ninety dollars. Still, Mamet's pitch-perfect dialogue, the depth of his characterization and his sense of the corroded social fabric, the wild humor and the sadness in the threadbare world he so completely imagines, are some kind of theatrical miracle. (3/27/00) (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ANIMAL MAGNETISM
Mabou Mines' latest work, a "live cartoon in animal drag," written by Terry O'Reilly. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Closes April 15.)

ARMS AND THE MAN
A Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

BAD BOY NIETZSCHE
Richard Foreman's examination of intellectual accountability and a philosopher's slide into madness. It's a smart play with a big payoff and, like all of Foreman's work, is the sort of thing that sticks in the brain in the best possible way. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS
In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the action has been shifted to a hip-hop realm, and the basic ideas remain the same, but the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

CONTACT
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18-25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's drama, which was inspired by a meeting in 1941 between the German physicist Werner Heisenberg and his Danish counterpart Niels Bohr. Michael Blakemore is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DAME EDNA: THE ROYAL TOUR
Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (11/1/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Donald Margulies's new play is a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE DIRECTOR
The playwright Nancy Hasty asks whether acting (which is essentially lying) can reveal deeper truth. It's a smart play, and, though it's not entirely satisfying intellectually, John Shea's brilliant performance as the director almost makes it seem so. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

DOWN THE DRAIN
The Adobe Theatre Company's latest offering is a play by Stanton Wood based on the Susan Smith case, in which a young white woman drowned her two sons in her car and then reported they'd been kidnapped by a black man. Under the sure hand of Paul Zablocki, the production illuminates the murderer's motives and her sometimes comic effect on the small town where she lived, without ever forgetting the deaths of the children or lapsing into sentimentality. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 532-8887. Closes April 15.)

FAMILY WEEK
Beth Henley's new play, about a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown and the family who

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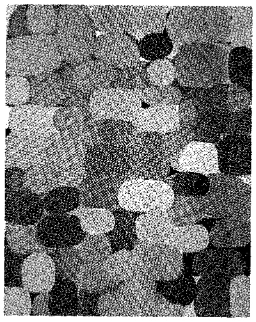

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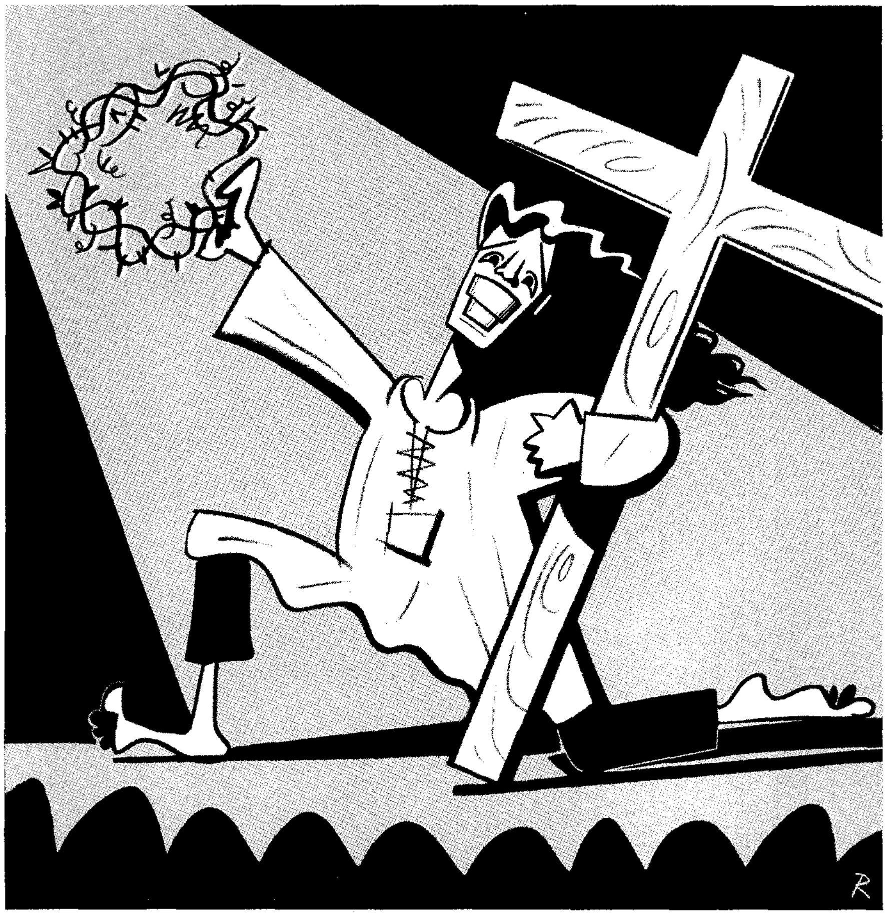


Glenn Carter, in Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Jesus Christ Superstar."

ROBERT RISKO

helped get her there, stars Carol Kane, Angelina Phillips, Rose Gregario, and Julia Weldon. Ulu Grosbard is the director. (Century Center, 115 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

FUDDY MEERS
David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy relies heavily on handicap humor: one of the characters is blind in one eye, and has a limp, a lisp, and an ear that's a "twisted mass of burnt scar tissue"; another has garbled speech as a result of a stroke; another is—ha ha ha—dyslexic. The excellent cast makes the most of what cleverness the play does contain; nonetheless, you may leave the theatre with the feeling that you just attended a Helen Keller-joke marathon. (3/6/00) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100. Closes April 16.)

IMPERFECT LOVE
The tightrope between love and ambition is delineated with passion, charm, and wit in this retelling of the story of the great Italian actress Eleonora Duse and her playwright lover, written by Brandon Cole. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 969-0166. Closes April 16.)

JACKIE MASON: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING
The comic is back on Broadway. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JAMES JOYCE'S THE DEAD
Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story. (11/8/99) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

KISS ME, KATE
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

MISS LULU BETT
Zona Gale's 1920 play about a spinster's emancipation. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-2031. Closes April 23.)

A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN
A solid and satisfying revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1943 drama about the unrequited love between a conniving farmer's faithful and unfulfilled daughter and the broken-down mess of a man she loves. Gabriel Byrne's performance as James Tyrone, an alcoholic actor who returns from New York to unburden himself in the arms of the earth mother Josie, is something to see: though his character is half-dead from drink, Byrne's vivid portrait conjures all the dimensions of the tortured emotion that got him there. Cherry Jones, however, usually an actress of subtlety, delivers such a mannered portrayal of Josie that she seems like Teflon; Byrne's performance practically slides right off her. But all in all it's fine Broadway theatre and not to be missed. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

MOVING BODIES
Arthur Giron's new play follows the life of the Manhattan Project physicist Richard Feynman. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982. Closes April 29.)

NAKED
A new translation of the Pirandello play, starring Mira Sorvino and Daniel Benzali and directed by John Rando. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes April 30.)

NOEL COWARD'S SUITE IN 2 KEYS
Two of the playwright's last works, "Shadows of the Evening" and "A Song at Twilight," performed by Hayley Mills, Judith Ivey, and Paxton Whitehead and directed by John Tillinger. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN
Patrick Stewart portrays a bigamist in Arthur Miller's play. David Esbjornson is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians comes to Broadway. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SWING!
A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's new comedy, about an antidote to midlife malaise, stars Linda Lavin, Michele Lee, and Tony Roberts. (3/20/00) (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 16.)

THE TIME OF THE CUCKOO
Arthur Laurents' 1953 play, set in Venice, stars Debra Munk as a romantically deprived American woman (or spinster, as they called them in the old days) who gets a chance at a vacation affair with an Italian shop owner. It's a lovely production of a dated play, with roundly good acting. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

TRUE WEST
A thrilling revival of Sam Shepard's 1980 play, directed by Matthew Warchus. It's a droll tall tale of sibling rivalry, in which an intrusive, beer-swilling outlaw named Lee and his brother, Austin, a put-upon Ivy League screenwriter, face off in their vacationing mother's tidy modern kitchen. John C. Reilly's roaring, as Lee, and Philip Seymour Hoffman's repressed hostility, as Austin, make for a wonderful contrast and a satisfyingly equal battle of wills, but when the actors switch roles (every few performances), Hoffman's derelict eyes, slurred sea-dog voice, and preternatural comic skills make the contest entertaining but lopsided. (3/27/00) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

WAITING IN THE WINGS
In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE WAVERLY GALLERY
Eileen Heckart portrays an aging Greenwich Village art dealer who must give up her gallery, in a new play by Kenneth Lonergan. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

THE YEAR OF THE BABY
A married couple goes underground after attempting to steal a baby, in a comedy by Quincy Long. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CATS
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FOOTLOOSE
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

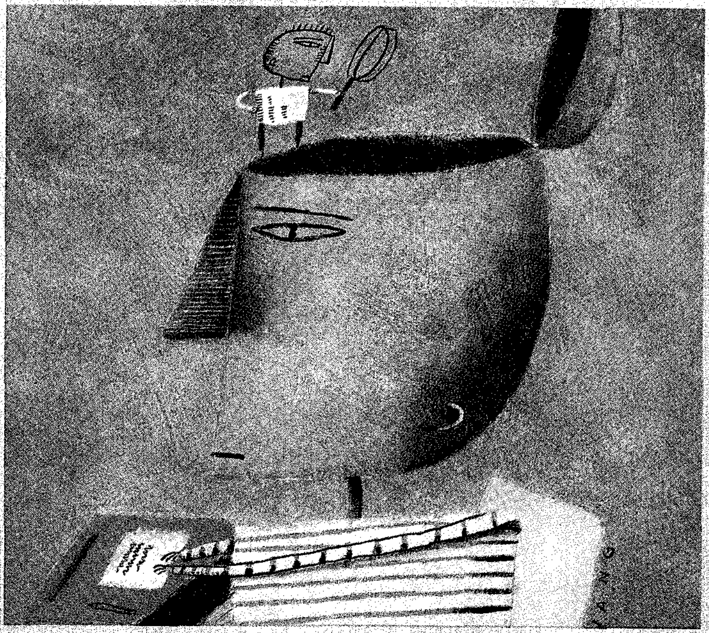
FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

JEKYLL & HYDE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

Brain Teaser



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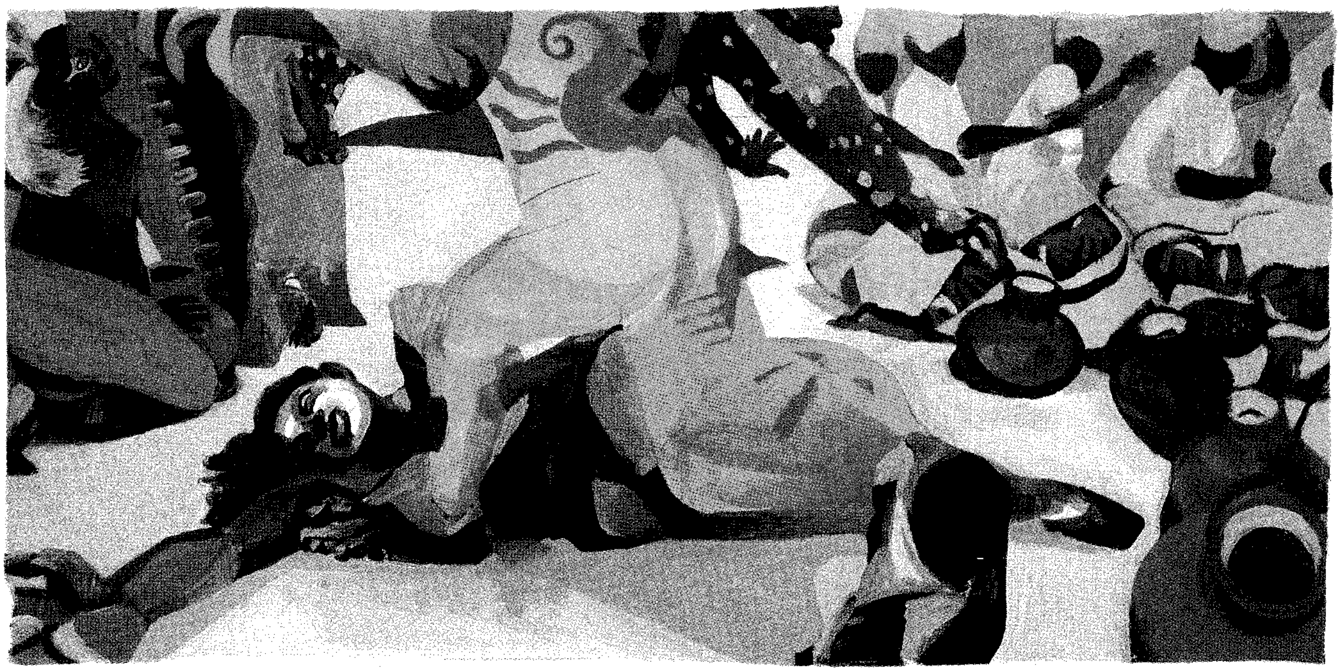
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MISS SAIGON
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.



The National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique, in a benefit for flood victims, at Town Hall.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

WIT
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

"PLATÉE"
The Mark Morris Dance Group appears in the New York City Opera's production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera-ballet about a self-involved swamp frog tricked into believing that Jupiter, the king of the gods, is in love with her. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. April 11 and April 18 at 7:30, April 14 at 8, and April 16 at 1:30. Through April 22.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
April 12 at 8: "Aurora I," "Coup de Couperin," and "Felix: The Ballet." ♦ April 13 at 8: "Aurora II," "Cherokee Rose," "Nodrog Doggo," and "Contra Pose." ♦ April 14 at 8: "Consort," "Kore," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ April 15 at 2: A family matinée. ♦ April 15 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Coup de Couperin," and "The Jig Is Up." ♦ April 16 at noon: A family matinée. ♦ April 16 at 4: "Play Bach," "Kore," "Medium: Rare," and "Meshugana Dance." ♦ April 18 at 8: "Aurora I," "Coup de Couperin," and "Felix: The Ballet." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 23.)

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG
During the final week of a three-week engagement, the forty-two-member company, under the direction of Boris Eifman, performs "Requiem" and "My Jerusalem." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 12-14 at 8, April 15 at 2 and 8, and April 16 at 2 and 7.)

"MOTHERWELL AMOR"
Lucia Dlugoszewski, the veteran musical collaborator and wife of Erick Hawkins, presents her second full-length work for the company, an homage to the painter Robert Motherwell. (92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project, Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 415-5553. April 11-13 and April 15 at 8 and April 16 at 5.)

"HI EVERYBODY!"
The choreographer Tere O'Connor reprises his pivotal 1999 work, in which he tested the satiric performance skills of his gifted dancers. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 13-15 at 8 and April 16 at 3. Through April 23.)

"FEMALE MYTHOLOGIES"
Five works by Ze'eva Cohen, devoted to mythical, Biblical, and archetypal women. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 13-16 at 8:30.)

"FRACTURED LIGHT"
The dancer and choreographer Stefa Zawerucha performs a solo based on interviews with lighting designers, which serve as a sort of score to the choreography. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 13-16 at 7:30. Through April 23.)

"COMPLETELY ATTACHED TO DELUSION"
For the title work, David Neuman dances while performance poet John Giorno reads from his latest verse. For the curtain closer, "Oyinobo (Dynamic Evolution of a Natural Population)," Neuman uses square dance and other Appalachian traditions to explore cultural bonds. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 13-16 at 8:30. Through April 23.)

"THE BEAT"
Former "Stomp" member Kamal Sinclair collaborates with playwright Robbie McCauley and poet Mustafa Shakir in a dance-theatre work that features Baakari Wilder, the slack and lanky tapper whose easy cool countered Savion Glover's percussive heat in "Bring in da Noise." (Context Studios, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. 802-9350. April 13-15 at 8. Through May 20.)

NATIONAL SONG AND DANCE COMPANY OF MOZAMBIQUE
In a benefit for flood victims in Mozambique, the country's leading dance company presents two works: "N'tsay," about a family that overcomes misfortune because of the mother's strong guidance; and "In Mozambique the Sun Has Risen Up," an assortment of regional dances put together for the tenth anniversary of the country's independence. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 16 at 7.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP'S THIRTY-FIFTH-ANNIVERSARY GALA
More than twenty acts that have performed at the Chelsea dance haven at pivotal junctures in their careers, including Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Bill Irwin, and Ann Carlson, present works in an evening honoring David R. White, D.T.W.'s visionary executive director and producer, a sort of latter-day Lincoln Kirstein for downtown dance. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 691-6500, ext. 377. April 17 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD
Officially entering the unplugged, if not entirely defunked, segment of their career, these acid-jazz hipsters are reinventing themselves as a mainstream piano trio, at least on their latest recording, "Tonic." The results, which will be on display during these performances, aren't as dispiriting as might be feared; for all their po-mo maneuvers, M., M. & W. have always had the chops to back up the attitude. John Medeski can get around an acoustic keyboard with the same flair with which he handles the Hammond organ, while Chris Wood and Billy Martin are, by now, a one-heartbeat bass-and-drums team. (Angel Orensanz Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St. 529-7194. April 12-16 at 8.)

"DUETS ON THE HUDSON"
Three older masters of what was once called "the new thing" will bring intimate avant-tinged jazz to this stunning performance space. Pianist Andrew Hill and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson go back to the sixties heyday of Blue Note Records, when the lines between the mainstream and the avant-garde were thrillingly blurred. Hutcherson's 1965 classic, "Dialogue," with playing and composition contributions from Hill, remains startlingly fresh. The luminous saxophonist, flutist, and pianist Sam Rivers is another vital Blue Note iconoclast, while his partner is percussionist Anthony Cole, a Rivers protégé and band member. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. April 15-16 at 8.)

PHIL LESH AND FRIENDS
Now that the Grateful Dead is just a tie-dyed memory, its former members have redoubled their solo efforts. According to philzone.com, the Web site for the Dead's affable bassist ("because the phans want to know"), the Friends appearing throughout this tour include Young Turks from the vast ranks of Grateful Dead wanna-bes, including moonlighting members of the Aquarium Rescue Unit, the Zen Tricksters, and perhaps even a representative from Phish. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. April 17-19 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

LA BELLE ÉPOQUE
827 Broadway, at 13th St. (254-6436)—April 16: **Leroy Thomas and the Zydeco Roadrunners.** The thirty-four-year-old Thomas started out in his father's zydeco band when he was just a teen-ager, and along the way he's honed his skill on the single-note accordion as well as the larger, piano-note accordion. Thomas also has a strong sense of humor, and when he breaks into the title track on his latest CD, "Monkey & the Baboon," ("Well the monkey and the baboon playing in the grass / Monkey told the baboon you kiss too fast / Baboon say no this cannot be / And the monkey say, baby, you're killing me"), even the most stressed-out New Yorkers will be in the mood to party. For information about dance lessons, provided at the show, call 685-7597.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 12: Teen-age blues-guitar phenom **Shannon Curfman.** April 13: **They Might Be Giants.** It's been more than a decade since John Flansburgh and John Linnell began performing their trademark jerky little pop songs full of surreal humor, and their appeal hasn't waned. April 15: Local singer-songwriter **Peter Salett** stands apart from other aspiring habitués of the downtown music clubs because of his voice, a rich and burnished instrument he obviously cultivates as much as he does unforgettable melodies and sharply drawn narratives. Tonight he celebrates his latest self-produced CD, "Heart of Mine," with the help of the exceptional slide guitar of Don Piper, the piano and organ of Joe McGinty, and other musicians.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 12: Born in Wales, raised in Brittany, and currently living in New York City and Dublin, **Katell Keineg** has a voice with as wide a range as her background. She has a couple of records on Elektra, the latest of which, "Jet," came out in 1997, but the best way to experience Keineg is live, where her forceful, beautiful, and wild soprano is free to express her inventive lyrics and accompany her strumming guitar without constraint. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 14-15: The hot and spicy funk of New Orleans's **Galactic,** which is fronted by the charismatic vocalist Theryl (the Houseman) de Clouet. With the **North Mississippi Allstars** on April 15. Led by Luther and Cody Dickinson, sons of the legendary producer and musician Jim Dickinson, this trio lends much needed new life to the Americana music scene: their youthful earnestness approaches Southern roots music with a great deal of respect, but they also rock with the intensity of Cream and Jimi Hendrix. April 17: **The Flaming Lips,** Oklahoma's weirdest exports, have come a long way since they formed as a garage band in 1983. After "She Don't Use Jelly" became a minor MTV hit in 1994, the band delved into serious esoterica, releasing an album meant to be played simultaneously on four CDs. With the recent release of the appropriately mind-blowing sci-fi-oriented album "The Soft Bulletin," the Lips bring their visionary daydreams back to the mainstream. With the homespun sounds of Scotland's **Looper.** April 18: The human beat box **Rahzel** is often found running around with the virtuosic hip-hop band the Roots, and his talent for stretching his lips, rapping, and laying down the beat matches the Roots' well-known skill. Also headlining this bill is **Mixmaster Mike,** a world-champion turntablist whose skill is so vast he's been banned from future scratch competitions. For the Mixmaster, two spinning records are not mere tools for replaying songs, but rather instruments for making new music. Also with the **Handsome Boy Modeling School,** featuring the pretty faces of **Prince Paul** and the **Automator.** Watch out while they make the future of hip-hop a safer place. ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—April 12: **Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire.** The classically trained violinist Bird, a frequent collaborator with the Squirrel Nut Zippers, has put together an acoustic quartet that mixes folk, rock, lieder, and New Orleans jazz, but the element that unifies the whole (and saves the project from collapsing under its own ambition) is Bird's sense of humor and wit, as evidenced on the group's latest release, "Oh! The Grandeur." With the eerie gothic country of Chicago's **Handsome Family.** April 14: The **North Mississippi Allstars** (see Irving Plaza). With the **Mighty Blue Kings,** a Windy City ensemble with a penchant for hard-swinging jump blues by Louis Jordan, Jimmie Lunceford, and their talented leader, Ross Bon.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 13: The **North Mississippi Allstars** (see Irving Plaza). April 14: **Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire** and the **Handsome Family** (see Maxwell's). April 15: The **Mighty Blue Kings** (see Maxwell's).

SHINE
285 West Broadway, at Canal St. (941-0900)—April 18: **Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise.** Bradley, a blind former street busker from Alabama by way of Detroit, turned to Motor City star of the moment Kid Rock for help on two tracks of the band's latest album, "Time to Discover." Let's give it up for Rock, if only for the commercial cachet his name brings Bradley, whose tight band deserves as wide an audience as possible: it moves effortlessly among styles, from Motown-inflected R. & B. to driving Texas-style blues to traditional soul. But Bradley has such a haunting gravel-and-silk voice that the band's solid musicianship is nearly upstaged on each song.

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—April 12: Bronx-born rapper **Kool Keith** possesses enough fictional personas to fill the Manhattan phone book. A founding member of the old-school icons the Ultramagnetic MCs, Keith (a.k.a. Keith Thornton) is also the extraterrestrial surgeon Dr. Octagon, the suicidal Dr. Doom, and the DAT-hating Robbie Analog. In his present incarnation, as the main character in the title of his latest album, "Black Elvis/Lost in Space," Keith raps his way through a hilariously warped universe that hints at his true identity: the mutant offspring of George Clinton and Andy Kaufman. April 13: **Corey Glover,** the frenetic former singer of Living Colour, shows off his high-volume, high-energy rock-and-rap solo act.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 12: **Papo Vázquez,** a hard-driving trombonist who has played with Slide Hampton, Ray Barretto, Chucho Valdes, and Tito Puente, stops by with his Latin-jazz ensemble, Pirates and Troubadours. April 13-15: Not even five swaggering hard-bop trumpeters—**Tom Harrell, Terrell Stafford, David**

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Weiss, Claudio Roditi, and **Bryan Lynch**—are capable of fully capturing the tangy blend of bravado and funky lyricism which made the short-lived trumpeter Lee Morgan a legend in his own time. Their attempts during this tribute, though, will undoubtedly be something to hear. Dining.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 16: The **David Murray** octet. One of the most pleasing aspects of Murray's playing is that, unlike the majority of saxophonists in his generation, he doesn't sound like John Coltrane. Yet if the timbre is more Sonny Rollins and the outside-the-lines effects are indebted to Albert Ayler, the soulfulness and sheer intensity of Murray's improvisations are heartfelt nods to the Master himself. "The Octet Plays Trane," the Murray ensemble's new disk, pays hearty but never slavish tribute to the most influential saxophonist of our time, and bodes well for this engagement. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—April 12-16: The **Frank Morgan** quartet. Morgan combines the rhythmic ethos of Charlie Parker with the languid sonority of Johnny Hodges, and he produces solos that honor both the bop he grew up with and the swing he obviously reveres. He doesn't get to town that often, so drop by and welcome him back. Dining.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—April 15: Her nasal drawl can be off-putting, but British vocalist **Stacey Kent** has the kind of spunk and unself-conscious attitude that eventually win you over. "Let Yourself Go," her new album, honors Fred Astaire; if Kent sticks to the Berlin and Gershwin that we associate with America's greatest dancer-singer, this will be a charmed evening.

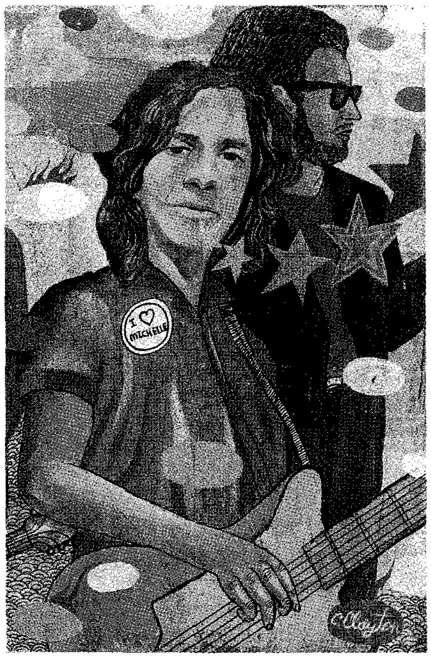
SWEET BASIL
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through April 16: **Donald Harrison's** days as a straitlaced neoconservative are long over. The New Orleans-born jazz saxophonist is now happy mixing and matching jazz with Mardi Gras Indian chants, Meters-style funk, and contemporary hip-hop. But when the mood strikes, he can still race a bebop tune into a sweat. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—April 14: The **Arturo O'Farrill** trio. His dad is Chico O'Farrill, one of the godfathers of Afro-Cuban jazz, thus pianist Arturo earned his Latin chops first hand. But he's also a persuasive mainstream player, steadily carving out an identity of his own. April 15: The **Antonio Hart** quintet. Like all of us, the wunderkinds of the mainstream jazz renaissance have gotten older. The strongest among them have also matured as players, including saxophonist Hart, a dashing improviser who's exchanged tempestuousness for clarity without losing the power to rattle a club's walls.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 16: The **Terence Blanchard** sextet. "Wandering Moon," Blanchard's recent album, owes much of its power and finesse to its guest players, Dave Holland, the formidable bassist, and saxophonist Branford Marsalis. Not to worry: along with being a trumpeter of uncommon lyricism and a composer with a sure, contemporary touch, Blanchard's a shrewd bandleader who's fortified his ensemble with impressive players, including drummer **Eric Harland** and pianist **Ed Simon.** Holland and Marsalis will be missed, but not for too long. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Once serenely indifferent to art after Gauguin, the Met's curators have been playing catch-up on MOMA's turf for fifty years. "Painters in Paris: 1895-1950" proves that they've come a long way. Nearly a quarter of the hundred or so paintings are by Picasso, including his famous portrait of Gertrude Stein, which she bequeathed to the surprised museum at a time when it didn't own a single work by the artist. Also represented here in depth are Matisse, Bonnard, Braque, and Balthus. As you might expect, the Met's version of modernism has a slightly conservative flavor: tradition-loving eccentrics like Derain, Marquet, Vallaton, and Helion make a strong showing, while Duchamp, Dali, and Mondrian are missing. This may be a philanthropic accident, but it's a happy one, leaving New York with duelling, Rashomonic versions of twentieth-century painting's golden age. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Walker Evans,"** a comprehensive retrospective, the photographer's first. Through May 14. ♦ **"The World of Scholar's Rocks."** Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt."** Through May 7. ♦ **"Tilman Riemenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages."** Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



The Flaming Lips, at Irving Plaza.

CHRISTIAN CLAYTON

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—MOMA goes multiplex with the launch of **"Making Choices,"** the first eleven segments of an eventual twenty-four-part show all focussed on works made between 1920 and 1960. As they did for the recent "People, Places and Things," the curators have drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings to mount the show. But while that sprawling trilogy ricocheted from homogeneity to disjunction, this show offers a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist. A small gallery on the first floor features the lush photography of Man Ray; its larger next-door neighbor sports architectural drawings and models by Louis Kahn. On the second floor the succinctly titled "War" pairs photographs from the U.S. naval archives with Picasso's gut-wrenching grisaille painting "The Charnel House," from 1945, which echoes his masterpiece "Guernica." The segue from horror to housewares—an installation of etchings by still-life maestro Giorgio Morandi—is strange, but soothing. Curator Robert Storr's contribution, "Modern Art Despite Modernism," charts the course of representational painting and includes a gorgeous Alex Katz portrait of his wife, Ada, which is so vital that it makes the models in the Philip Pearlstein painting to its right look like something from a mortuary slab. Through July 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

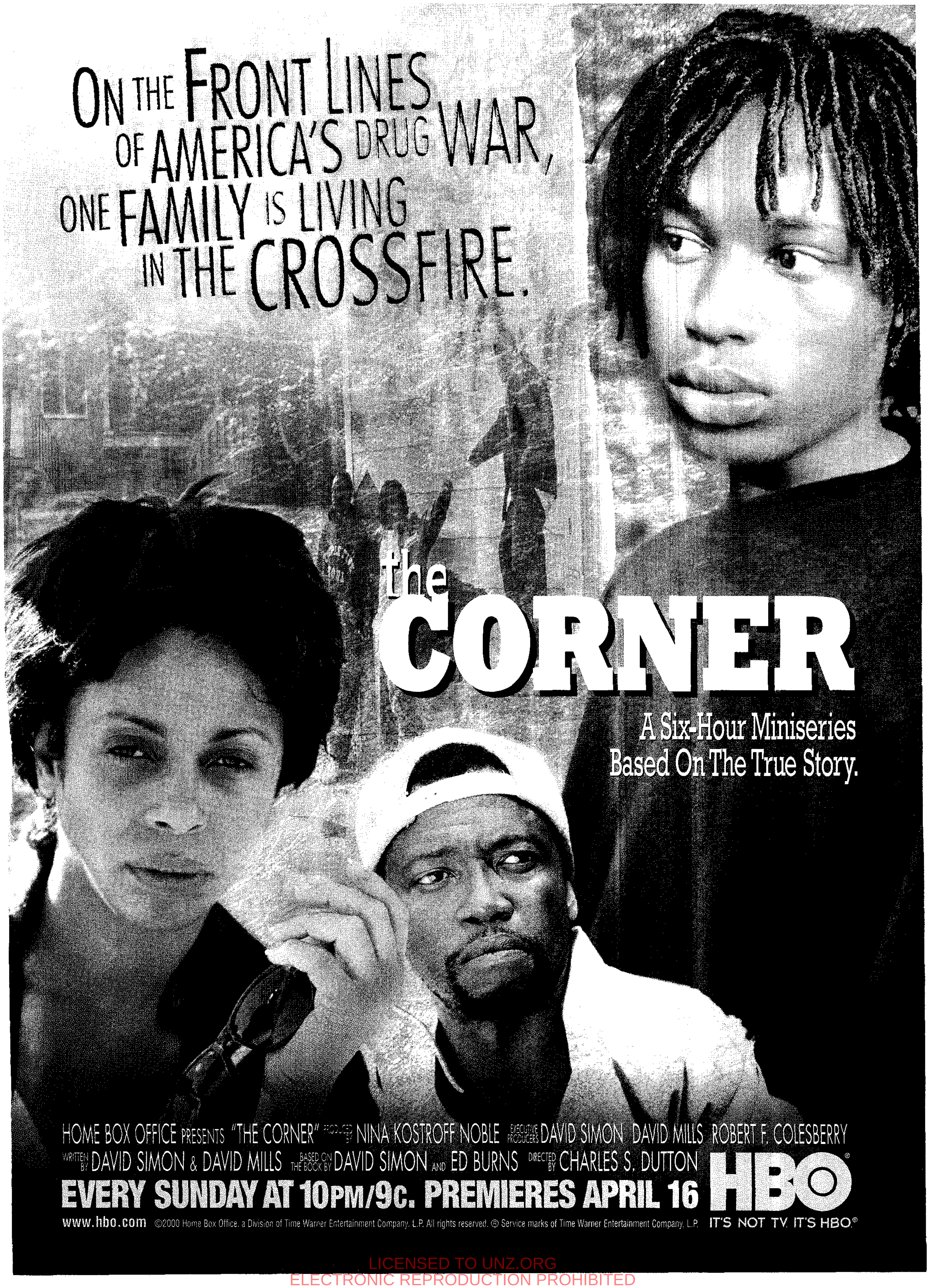
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—With green laser beams ricocheting through a six-story waterfall, and hundreds of TV screens providing ambient noise and light, the Nam June Paik retrospective looks, from ground level, like a sure-fire crowd-pleaser. Instead it leaves one disenchanted and puzzled. For the most part, the father of video art comes off as an unexpectedly slight figure, a likable, playful avant-gardist whose imaginative resources have seldom matched his commitment to the idea of innovation. Through April 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Whitney **2000 Biennial Exhibition,** with ninety-seven artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, and installation and Internet artists, as well as videographers and filmmakers) chosen by a team of six curators. Through June 4. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The newly renovated Hayden Planetarium lets you enjoy a twenty-minute cosmic journey, narrated by Tom Hanks, which goes from Earth to the Milky Way out to the Virgo Supercluster, then through a black hole right back home. Reservations for regular Space Shows are advised, and available at 769-5200. ♦ **"Body Art: Marks of Identity."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Guennol Collection: Cabinet of Wonders."** Over the past fifty years, Alastair Bradley Martin and his wife, Edith, have amassed an eclectic collection of art and objects under the pseudonym Guennol, after the Welsh word for "martin" (the couple honeymooned in Wales). The installation of Joseph Cornell's "Starfish" smack in the center of the introductory wall text is a tip that you're in for something out of the ordinary. The show is cleverly organized around the theme of the seventeenth-century *Wunderkammer,* an assemblage of artistic treasures and natural wonders, rather than along more conventional chronological or art-historical lines. DeKooning's ferocious "Woman"—a fine drawing from the mid-fifties—salaciously bares her teeth beside a New Mexican sculpture of a female skeleton while a massive Japanese guardian head from the thirteenth century looks on. As for wonders, it's hard to beat the small chunk of rattlesnake agate titled "Gorilla Playing a Tom-Tom." Through May 7. ♦ **"Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo"** showcases the museum's complete set, one of the finest extant, by the influential master of the wood-block print. Through April 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

THE NEW MUSEUM
583 Broadway (219-1222)—If you're looking for a place where all the women are strong, forget about Lake Woebegon and hightail it over to **"Picturing the Modern Amazon,"** an exhibition billed as the first "devoted to the representation of hyper-muscular and physically strong women." A bevy of eye-popping (not to mention vein-popping) bodybuilders grace the galleries in photographs, paintings, sculptures, and videotapes, many of which were created specifically for the exhibition. Highlights include a robust reinvention of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, by Louise Bourgeois, and a sly color photograph by Susan Meiselas of three muscular figures in evening gowns. A giddy stop-action video marrying amazons, glitter, and a cake by Oliver Herring adds levity, as do a naughty drawing by Nicole Eisenman of Alice in Wonderland and a selection of comics by artists ranging from R. Crumb to Little Lotta. Although the curators—two art historians and a bodybuilder—clearly intend to challenge conventional views of the female form and honor what they see as the power of their subject, the inclusion of historic material from carnival sideshows underscores an inevitable sense of the grotesque. Through June 25. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)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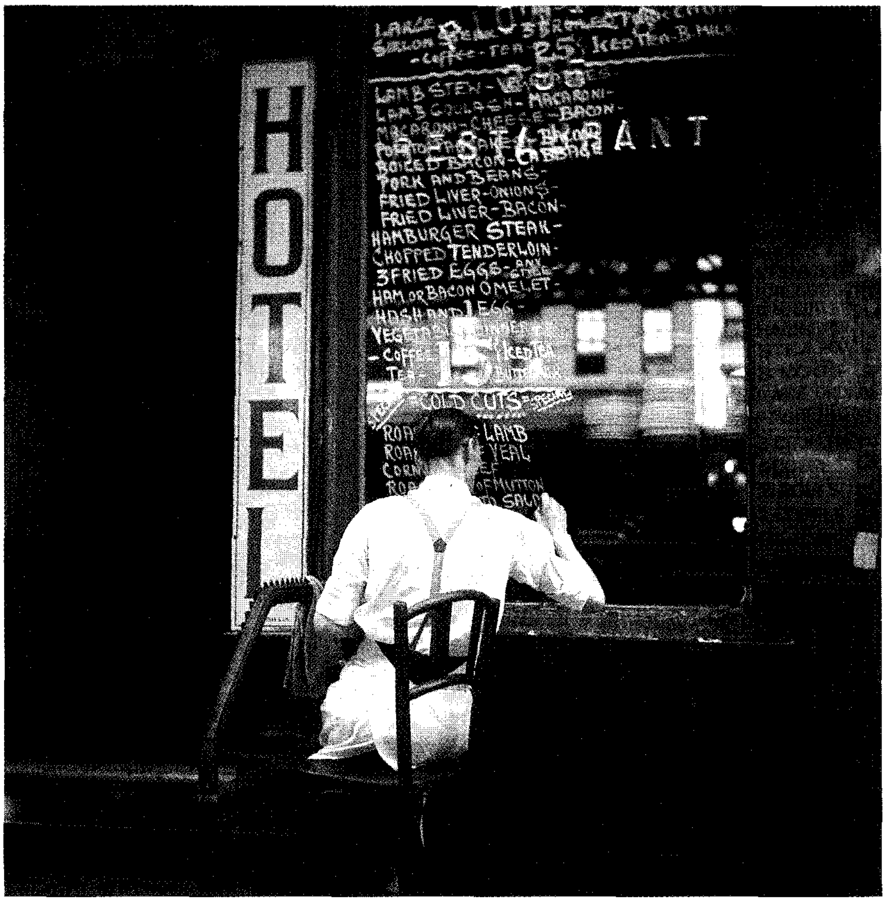

An untitled work by Therese Mitchell, at the Municipal Art Society (see Photography).

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ROSS BRAUGHT
A welcome reappraisal of a mid-century Middle American artist (1898-1983) who has all but disappeared, maybe because he could scarcely part with his intricate works, or because he communicated only by letters for the last twenty years of his life. The early works—lithographs, sketches, and paintings—recall both the stage-lit compositions of Rockwell Kent and the hale Americana of Thomas Hart Benton, but the late works are stirringly hallucinogenic. The two largest, "Adam and Eve" and "Decline of the West"—painted after nearly a decade of isolated drawing in Guyana and the Caribbean—have a sensual, jungle luminosity. As in the work of Blake, the strong illumination feels mystic and earthy at once. Through April 22. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

MIMI GROSS
Loose, large works on Haitian themes which match the bright palette of the country's folk art with the ambitious scale of a Géricault. The results, which are strong on a sort of painted polyrhythm, re-create vivid island scenes in tropical color, but the show's most affecting work is touching for its modesty: on a keen little iMac in the corner, visitors can click through a sketchbook, a mix of California landscapes and portraits of a cradled infant, dedicated to the artist's newborn granddaughter. An intimate solution to the curatorial dilemma of fragile artist's books. Through April 29. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

FRANCIS PICABIA
This Franco-Iberian painter and bon vivant (1879-1953) is the Rickey Henderson of early-twentieth-century art: never a team player, but nonetheless a stellar presence on a series of historic squads (the Fauvists, the Cubists, the Dadaists, et al.). The Werner gallery has gathered some beautiful examples of Picabia's various styles—from the somewhat doctrinal Cubist and machinist works to such endearing and influential later work as the "transparencies" (a strategy pilfered by Salle, Pollock, and Polke, to name just a few of the iconoclasts who have worshipped him) and the kitschy canvases of Picabia's final years, with their images lovingly repainted from pulp sources. Through June 3. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

Short List

JENNIFER BARTLETT
Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren,
730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.
Through May 13.

GEORG BASELITZ
Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St.
421-3292. Through April 22.

ANTHONY CARO
Ameringer Howard, 41 E. 57th St. 935-1110.
Through April 22.

JANE FREILICHER
De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
262-5050. Through April 22.

LUCIAN FREUD
Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 734-6300.
Through May 19.

DAN GRAHAM
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through May 20.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

MAUREEN GALLACE
Can you spot a white clapboard house in a snowstorm? These cream-on-cream New England landscapes, simplified to the point of abstraction, take a moment to register as a remarkably deadpan refusal to play at high-concept art. Whether done in innocence, mischief, or both, the finished work is as Zen as can be, and easy to look at. A mixed group of oils in the front room sets the standard, and is varied by a set of rougher, more suburban pieces, a trio of Cape Cod pastels, and a self-portrait—the white artist standing beside a white picture of a white house. Through April 29. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

ROSS KNIGHT / KAREN KING
Ross Knight's collapsible metal-and-vinyl sculptures seem divided between obstruction and disappearance—one blocks a desk at the end of the entrance hall, and another, in camouflaging clear gray, curves its back to the wall in a distant corner. Karen King's portraits, on the other hand, are emblems of identity: blown-up photographs taken from driver's licenses, passports, and other I.D. Meant to distill the Warholian fifteen minutes to a bleak, state-controlled blink of the eye, her portraits are in fact passably flattering to most of their subjects. Both shows through April 22. (Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219.)

JUDY LEDGERWOOD / JEREMY BLAKE
These two subversively decorative artists show well together. Ledgerwood's large patterned abstractions, which make use of pearlescent and metallic shades, aim for moody atmospherics, while Blake indulges in more showstopping flights. His "Angel Dust," which is also on view at P.S. 1, sets colored rectangles, Tetris-like, into rows, eventually filling a starry-sky screen with a grid of pulsing lights. The technology—computer animation and D.V.D. projection—is up to the minute, but the associations are more than twenty years old—Blake brings back "Saturday Night Fever" and "Close Encounters" in equal doses. Both shows through April 15. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

MATT MULLICAN
For "Informations," Matt Mullican built a low wall across Urbach's modest space and piled his goodies on several tables on either side. Three sets of Magic Markered glass vessels are tantalizingly maplike, and suggestive of the skyline outside. A computer, with handwritten instructions taped to the table, offers access to both found images and pages from the artist's sketchbooks. Through April 22. (Urbach Architecture, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.)

JAMES SIENA
Idiosyncratic geometric abstractions so obsessive they might have been made by a madman. Siena paints patterns run amok, irrational systems rendered freehand, in enamel on aluminum. The best is "Two Nesting Spirals (Red and Black)," vibrating on a wall by itself. A pair of solid rectangles are circumscribed by two alternating lines, each originating from a corner of the forms. The dizzying results recede and advance, like some aerial view of a woozy pyramid. Through April 15. (Gorney, Bravin, and Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

AMY SILLMAN
Radiant paintings and works on paper that conjure grief and joy in equal measure. The artist has recently returned from a residency in Umbria, and the glow and palette—yellow, rose, robin's egg blue—of the Renaissance shine through. As always, the pictures are populated by cartoony figures, Mughal miniatures by way of Matt Groening. A group of gouaches gives new meaning to the phrase "gut feeling," with characters' stomachs opening to reveal all manner of things, from a rowboat to rays of golden light. In the paintings, previously legible scraps of text have given way to jumbles of letters, like anagrams of the mysteries of life. Through April 29. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

Short List

PIPILOTTI RIST
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.
Through May 27.

ERIC WOLF
Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St.
633-6555. Through April 29.

OTTO ZITKO
Cheim and Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.
Through April 22.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

DAVID BUNN
This conceptual artist's material of choice is that dodo bird of information systems, the library catalogue card. Here Bunn pairs handmade copies of obsolete cards from Philadelphia's Mutter Museum—an institution well stocked with medical oddities—with samples from his own extensive collection. Thus, a card recording the head of a murderer is accompanied by three literary titles: "So I Killed Her." "So I Said to Mr. Morgan." "So I Went to Prison." Found poetry meets the Surrealist game of Exquisite Corpse. Through April 22. (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338.)

JAMES CASTLE
Haunting domestic landscapes and interiors by a self-taught artist. Born in Idaho in 1900, the deaf-mute Castle, who died in 1977, refused to study sign language and never learned to read or write. But he communicated eloquently through intimate drawings rendered with soot and spit on found paper, using a sharpened stick in lieu of a brush—materials he preferred to more conventional art supplies. A sense of isolation permeates these sparrow-colored pictures of empty rooms and farmyards, which feel more like memories than places. Through May 4. (The Drawing Center, 40 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

CASEY COOK
Grand-scale canvases of luscious Barnett Newman-style color adorned with porno marginalia. In this graphic pairing—overwhelming color and cramped scenes of fetish and bordello sex—it's color that wins. The bodies in standard hardcore presentations are clinical and anonymous, and all the emotional punch comes from the big, rich, monochrome expanses. Through April 22. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

"ACHIEVING FAILURE: GYM CULTURE 2000"
Drawing a wry parallel between making art and working out, curator Bill Arning defines both as "non-productive, non-wage-earning labor" and combines them in a show about cultural obsession with fitness. Conjuring the anxiety of many a sixth grader, Andre Hébért re-creates a claustrophobic locker room, replete with sneering coach. At the other end of the spectrum is Jessica Wynne's portrait of a young wrestler with a badly mended broken nose. As a T-shirt in Linda Nishio's "Meta-Tation Gym" installation asks, "Can one be spiritually elevated without suffering?" Through April 29. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

Short List

CHUCK CLOSE
Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.
Through May 6.

CARL FUDGE
Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.
Through May 6.

JACQUELINE GOUREVITCH
DFN Gallery, 560 Broadway. 334-3400.
Through May 13.

RICHARD LONG
Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.
431-3685. Through April 29.

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS
Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.
Through April 22.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
April 12-13: Two days of jewelry auctions. ♦ April 14: Sporting paintings and porcelain. ♦ April 15: English furniture; also, a wine auction. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
April 12: Watches, including an extensive selection of Patek Philippe pieces. ♦ April 13: The highlight of an English furniture sale is a pair of mid-eighteenth-century George II fruitwood library chairs attributed to Thomas Chippendale. ♦ April 17: Rare books and manuscripts. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CHRISTIE'S EAST
April 12: Books and manuscripts. ♦ April 13: Moderately priced jewelry. ♦ April 14: Silver. ♦ April 18: European decorative art works and rugs. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0430.)

PHILLIPS
Antique and fine jewelry. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. April 16.)

DOYLE
Estate jewelry, watches, and objects of virtu. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. April 18.)

SWANN
An auction of rare books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. April 13.)

NEW YORK ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIR
The fortieth annual installment of this bibliophile's classic. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. April 13-16. For information, call 777-5218.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

KATE BELTON
Belton, a fine specimen of genus Y.B.A. (Young British Artist), has moved from staged interiors to small-scale still-lifes, making eerily threatening landscapes from flour, sugar, salt, potting soil, and a few props. Through April 29. (P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.)

SONJA BRAAS
Braas records the zoo and museum habitats of caged and stuffed animals, and shows them alongside real—that is, outdoor—landscapes of Australia, Switzerland, and New England. Through April 22. (Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318.)

FLINT GENNARI
Fifteen years ago Gennari was employed for a short time as a cameraman in a SoHo engraver's shop. In his official capacity, he took pictures that

Henri Matisse, The Young Sailor II, 1906, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998. © 2000 Succession H. Matisse, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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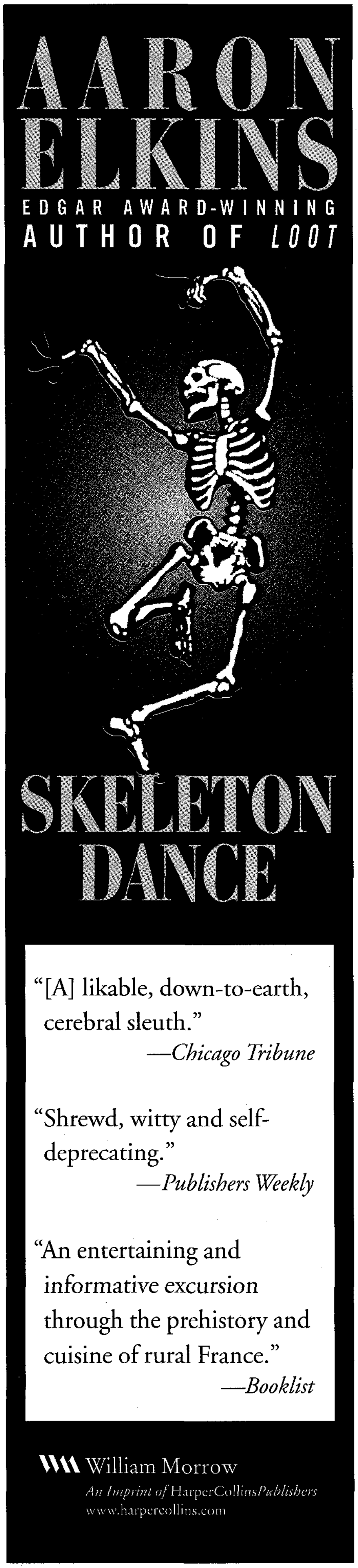
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—*Publishers Weekly*

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—*Booklist*

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were used in the engraving process; unofficially, his principal subject soon became the unusual goings on in the shop itself, namely the antics and anguish of his co-worker Felix, the master engraver. Charming, drug-addicted, and seemingly touched with madness, Felix struggles to retain his individuality amid mundane surroundings; his fight takes on almost metaphysical overtones in this highly unusual series of gritty black-and-white prints. Through April 23. (Snug Harbor Cultural Center, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island. 718-448-2500.)

E. O. HOPPÉ
Though Hoppé may have been better known for his early-twentieth-century celebrity portraits and his co-founding of the London Salon of Photography, he also published twenty-eight books, most of which were full of topologies like the ones shown here. These were shot in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, in English, German, and American cities and industrial areas. The prints are small, many less than eight by ten, and the compositions are assembled with a sophisticated geometry. Through April 22. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

THERESE MITCHELL
Former *New Yorker* staff writer Joseph Mitchell, famous in his day for his tales of the city's odder denizens, is famous once again as the subject of the new movie "Joe Gould's Secret." But Mitchell wasn't the only artist in his family. During the nineteen-thirties and forties, his wife, Therese, roamed the streets alongside him, using her Roloflex to snap away at anything that caught her eye. Therese never showed her photographs, which went into storage after her death, in 1979. The rediscovered cache is a minor historical treasure—the eighteen small, sharp photos shown here, which range from reportorial images of Depression-era unrest to frank portraits, are a visual companion to her husband's profiles. Through May 14. (The Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960.)

MICHAEL O'BRIEN
O'Brien's minute details of the seascape are cross-processed within an inch of their lives, and survive. Some are shot on infrared film, and many are brightly colored enough to be confused with Lava-lamp interiors. Through April 22. (Dee/Glasoe, 529 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

LOUIS ROBERT
These rare and beautiful paper negatives and prints of portraits, architecture, and landscapes from an early (1810-82), little-known French photographic master are shown together here for the first and likely last time in New York. Through April 15. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

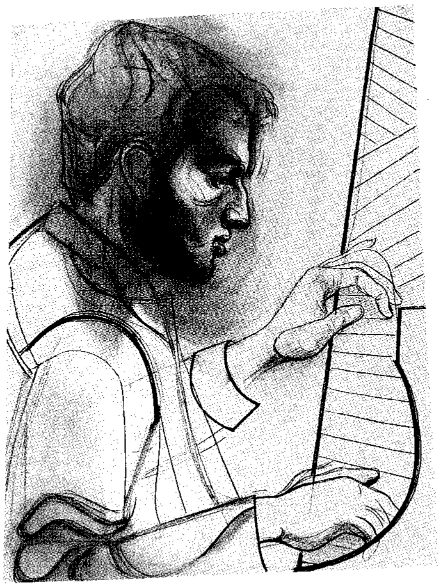
AMY STEINER
Steiner's light-boxed portraits of women in their twenties are informal, and all taken outdoors, with models posed in various grungy clothes and defiant expressions. One nonchalant wild child's mouth is so stained with berry juice that it almost guarantees a double take. Through April 22. (Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 243-3335.)

ANTHONY SUAU
A photojournalist with an eye for the surreal, Suau took these smart photos of Russia in the decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain. One shot shows a dark sedan cruising across a wide avenue that recedes to an onion-domed building as the car's passenger inspects the photographer. Through June 3. (Newseum, 580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays through Saturdays. 317-7503.)

WILLIAM SUTTLE
Suttle knows his territory, and, luckily for viewers, his territory is Atlantic City. "Blessings of Liberty" includes color views of sand sculptors and shell collectors, regulars, tourists, local entertainment, surf, and sky. Through April 22. (OK Harris, 383 W. Broadway. 431-3600.)

OLIVER WASOW
These digitally collaged landscapes look like science-fiction futures, while the interiors could be slides of installations in nearby galleries. Through April 29. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—**"Picturing Business: The Photography of *Fortune* Magazine."** Margaret Bourke-White got the ball rolling in *Fortune's* 1930 inaugural issue with a photo-essay on a hog-processing plant. Her elegant black-and-white, Machine Age patterns avoid outright gore, but we wind up staring down the slope of a staggeringly vast mountain of pig dust. Of course Walker Evans is the star here, not only because his rare, unpublished pictures dominate the show (the luminous color shots from moving trains are uncharacteristically spontaneous, and a dead-on view of modern life) but because his position as special photography editor for the magazine allowed him to involve the likes of Robert Frank, whose bemused series on commuting fat cats was decidedly not capitalistic propaganda. Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)



SECOND WIND *Whatever happened to Dimitris Sgouros? Born in Athens in 1969, the pianist was dubbed a preteen wunderkind; even the redoubtable Arthur Rubinstein declared him a phenomenon and gave him a gold watch as a talisman. Conductors, critics, and audiences applauded his high-wire virtuosity. And then, near-silence. Maybe poor management was to blame, or perhaps other activities intervened, such as studying literature in Madrid and mathematics at Oxford. In any case, Sgouros is represented in the United States by exactly one in-print CD—a powerful reading of the Brahms concertos, on the Capriccio label—and is only this week venturing his New York début solo recital, in which he'll perform intellectual works from the Germanic mainstream. Can Sgouros rekindle his career at the age of thirty? His Carnegie Hall appearance, on April 14, should be a critical step.*

DAVID TOMB

Short List

CHUCK CLOSE
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through April 22.

DANIELLE EPSTEIN
Robin Rice, 325 W. 11th St. 366-6660.
Through May 20.

DANNY LYON
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 750-7070.
Through April 22.

DAVID PLOWDEN / ZEKE BERMAN
Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Both shows through April 29.

"SELF-PORTRAITS & PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK"
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through June 17.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Il Barbiere di Siviglia," with Carmen Oprisanu, Michael Schade, Russell Braun, Paul Plishka, and Vladimir Ognovenko; conducted by Bruno Campanella. (April 12 at 8.) ♦ **"Pelléas et Mélisande,"** with Dawn Upshaw, Nadine Denize, Dwayne Croft, Willard White, and Robert Lloyd; James Levine. (April 13 and April 17 at 8.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Youngok Shin, Frank Lopardo, and Kim Josephson; Nello Santi. (April 14 and April 18 at 8.) ♦ **"Siegfried"** with Jane Eaglen, Birgitta Svendén, Stig Andersen, Graham Clark, James Morris, and Ekkehard Wlaschiha; Mr. Levine. (April 15 at 12:30.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Nuccia Focile, Nancy Gustafson, Franco Farina, and Rodney Gilfry; Plácido Domingo. (April 15 at 8:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
April 12 at 7:30 and April 15 at 8: "La Clemenza di Tito," in a profoundly satisfying production of this sophisticated masterwork of Mozart's final year, featuring an especially strong interpretation from mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in the role of Sesto. ♦ April 13 at 7:30 and April 15 at 1:30: "Carmen." ♦ April 14 at 8, April 16 at 1:30, and April 18 at 7:30: Rameau's *comédie lyrique* "Platée," in a production directed and choreographed by Mark Morris. The cast includes sopranos Christine Brandes and Amy Burton and tenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

FOLKOPERAN
This Stockholm-based troupe, which presents standard operas in pared-down productions, offers "Carmen," performed in Swedish (with English surtitles). (BAM's Harvey—formerly the Majestic—Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 13 and April 15 at 7:30 and April 16 at 3.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER
Presenting Kurt Weill's operetta "Der Kuhhandel," fully staged and offered in a new English version. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. April 13 and April 15 at 8.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless ensemble makes its first foray into opera with a semi-staged concert performance of Rossini's 1813 comic opera "Il Signor Bruschino," with soprano Lauren Flanigan heading the cast. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

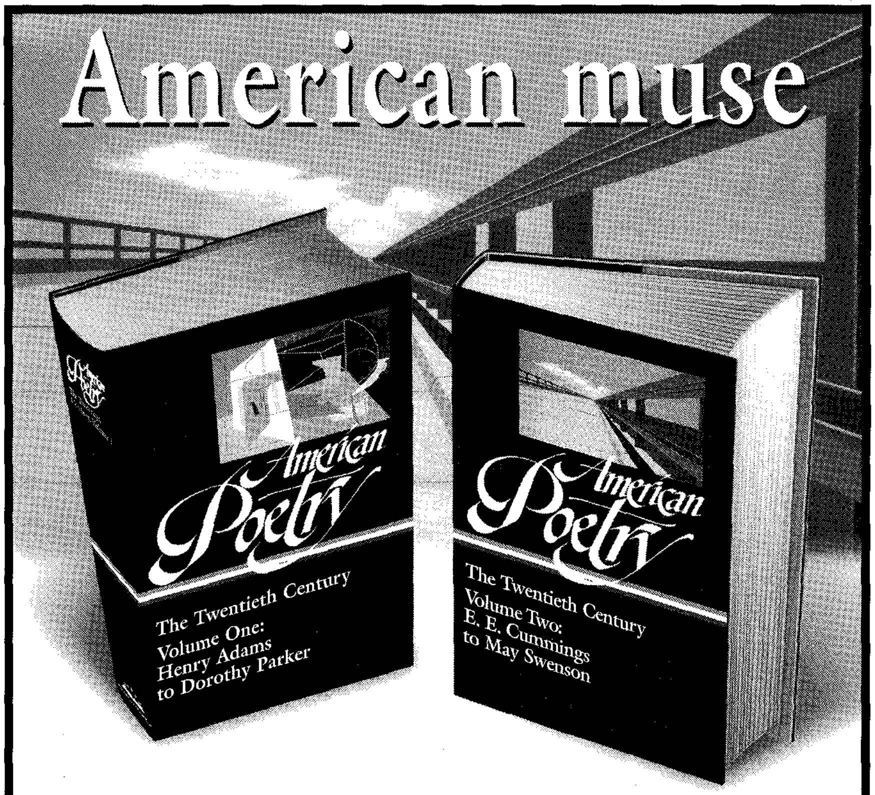
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur conducts Rachmaninoff's symphonic poem "The Isle of the Dead" (inspired by Arnold Böcklin's painting), Britten's "Four Sea Interludes" from "Peter Grimes," and two works featuring soprano Deborah Voigt: Barber's rarely performed "Andromache's Farewell" and the final scene from Strauss's "Salome." (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 13-15 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Robert Spano conducts an all-Finnish concert that includes Einojuhani Rautavaara's "Cantus Arcticus," a so-called "concerto for birds and orchestra," composed in 1972, in which recorded bird-calls are woven into the symphonic texture. Rounding out this program are works by Magnus Lindberg, Aulis Sallinen, and Sibelius (his Symphony No. 5). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 14-15 at 8.) ♦ Note: Aficionados of Finnish music may also check out a recital of works by Sibelius, Rautavaara, and Aarre Merikanto, presented this week by the Sibelius Society. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. April 12 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Early-music guru Gustav Leonhardt directs the choir and period-instrument players in sacred music by Bach (his Cantatas No. 27, No. 135, and No. 150) and his German Baroque forebears Matthias Weckmann, Johann Christoph Bach, and Johann Kuhnau (Bach's predecessor as music director in Leipzig). (LeFrak Concert Hall, Queens College, Flushing. 718-793-8080. April 14 at 8. ♦ Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. April 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 717-9246.)

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless ensemble performs string-orchestra arrangements of Prokofiev's "Visions Fugitives," Janáček's String Quartet No. 1, and a madrigal by Gesualdo, in addition to Brett Dean's "Carlo" (inspired by Gesualdo) and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1 (featuring pianist Anne-Marie McDermott—who also plays a role in the Prokofiev—and trumpeter Jeff Segal). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 15 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leon Botstein leads Glière's six-movement Symphony No. 3, inspired by the exploits of the Slavic folk hero Ilya Muramets. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 16 at 3.)



In honor of National Poetry Month, The Library of America issues the first two volumes of a wide-ranging new anthology of 20th-century American verse. Giving ample space to such acknowledged giants as Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, and Langston Hughes, this set also includes experimenters and protesters, masters of light verse, great blues lyricists, and others whose voices transformed the very definition of poetry in the first half of the 20th century.

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MUSIC BEFORE 1800 PRODUCTIONS
This choral ensemble, which is essentially the Choir of Corpus Christi Church eked out by a continuo underpinning, offers music for Lent and Holy Week, including motets by Johann Hermann Schein, Monteverdi, and Schütz, in addition to the "St. John Passion" of the mid-sixteenth-century Italian madrigalist Cipriano de Rore. Louise Basbas directs. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. April 16 at 4.)

BAMBERG SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The violinist Kennedy is featured in pops favorites, as well as in concertos by Bach (in A Minor) and Beethoven. Pieter Daniel conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 16 at 7:30.)

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHOIR
William Trafka conducts the choir and the American Classical Orchestra in a period-instrument interpretation of Bach's "St. John Passion," with tenor Mark Bleeke as the Evangelist and bass Joel Frederiksen as Jesus. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. April 18 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
April 12 at 8: Presenting the Tokyo String Quartet in a program that comprises Haydn's Quartet in G Major (Op. 77, No. 1), Schumann's Quartet in A Major, and (with pianist Gary Graffman) Schnittke's Piano Quintet. ♦ April 16 at 5 and April 18 at 7:30: Violist Paul Neubauer is the central player in works by Bach, Derek Bermel, Schumann (his "Märchenbilder"), Kurtág (his Schumann-inspired "Hommage à Robert Schumann"), and Brahms (the composer-sanctioned viola version of his Clarinet Trio). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

BARGEMUSIC
April 13 and April 15 at 7:30: Guitarist David Leisner is featured in chamber works by Piazzolla, Paganini, and Boccherini, in a program that also includes the Third String Quartet of Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga, the so-called "Spanish Mozart," whose extravagant talent was cut short by his untimely death, at the age of nineteen, in 1826. ♦ April 14 at 7:30 and April 16 at 4: Presenting Beethoven's C-Major Piano Quartet (WoO 36), Shostakovich's "Seven Songs to Words by Aleksandr Blok" (with soprano Olga Dyachkovskaya), and Dvořák's Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 87). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

BYRON JANIS
The pianist performs selections from Prokofiev's "Visions Fugitives" and nine pieces by Chopin. Violinist Jane Peters assists in Beethoven's "Spring" Sonata, and soprano Leslie Bega performs several of Mr. Janis's songs. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 13 at 8.)

DIMITRIS SGOUROS
In his New York solo-recital début, the pianist performs Schubert's Impromptu in B-Flat Major (D. 955), Schumann's C-Major Fantaisie (Op. 17), and Brahms's Sonata No. 3. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 14 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Mezzo-soprano Rinat Shaham and baritone Kurt Ollmann join pianists Michael Barrett and Steven Blier for a tribute to Francis Poulenc. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 14 at 8.)

FORTUNE'S WHEEL
The Cloisters' septcentenary tribute to Guillaume de Machaut concludes as this early-music ensemble performs fourteenth-century French trouvère music, in addition to polyphonic compositions by Machaut. (Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. April 16 at 1 and 3.)

SUSAN GRAHAM
The mezzo-soprano, assisted by pianist Malcolm Martineau, performs a wide-ranging recital of French and American songs. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 16 at 2.)

GIL SHAHAM
The violinist, assisted by pianist Akira Eguchi, offers a program that includes sonatas by Bach (in E Major) and Beethoven (in C Minor, Op. 30, No. 2), Bartók's Rhapsody No. 2, and Copland's "Ukelele Serenade." (LeFrak Concert Hall, Queens College, Flushing. 718-793-8080. April 16 at 8. ♦ Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 18 at 7:30.)

PETER SERKIN
The pianist performs Stefan Wolpe's Toccata, Schoenberg's Suite for Piano (Op. 25), Mozart's Sonata in F Major (K. 332), and Beethoven's Sonata in E-Flat Major (Op. 81a, "Les Adieux"). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 17 at 7:30.)

JORJA FLEEZANIS
The concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra restrings her late-eighteenth-century Storioni instrument with gutstrings for Beethoven's Violin Sonatas in A Minor (Op. 23), G Major (Op. 96), E-Flat Major (Op. 12, No. 3), and C Minor (Op. 30, No. 2), with fortepianist Cyril Huvé assisting. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 17 at 8.)

LAUREN FLANIGAN
The intrepid soprano focusses on jazz-inspired art songs from the first half of the twentieth century. Pianist Kamal Khan assists. (Joe's Pub, at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. 539-8778. April 17 at 8:30.)

ENSEMBLE 21
The modern-music group performs the final composition by Morton Feldman, his slowly unrolling "Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello," composed in 1987. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 18 at 8.)

BRIAN ZEGER AND FRIENDS
The pianist is joined by colleagues for a diverse lineup of chamber works: Ravel's Violin Sonata (with Cho-Liang Lin), Shostakovich's Viola Sonata (his final composition, here featuring Toby Appel), Debussy's duo-piano suite "En Blanc et Noir" (with Jonathan Feldman assisting), and Franck's Piano Quintet (with the Whitman String Quartet). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. April 18 at 8.)

CIOMPI STRING QUARTET
The foursome plays quartets by Prokofiev (his Second), Mario Davidovsky (his Fifth), and Janáček (his First), in addition to Zhou Long's "Soul" (with *pipa* player Min Xiao-Fen assisting) and several of his arrangements of Chinese folk songs. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 18 at 8.)

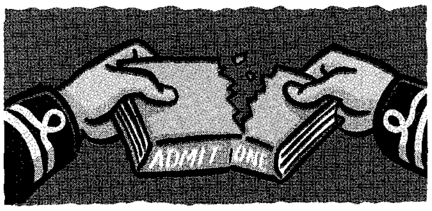
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
April 12 at 7: By translator Richard Howard, poet Molly Peacock, painter Rosalyn Jacobs, and others, from the work of Emily Dickinson. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 14 at 7: By Jonathan Lethem, Colson Whitehead, and David Knowles, from their respective novels, "Motherless Brooklyn," "The Intuitionist," and "The Third Eye." (Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. For reservations, which are required, call 782-9796.) ♦ April 17 at 7:30: By poets Billy Collins and Paul Violi. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
April 13-14 from 9 to 4:30: Ellen V. Futter, president of the American Museum of Natural History, James M. Large, Jr., acting president of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Michael W. Klemens, director of the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance, and more than twenty other biologists, land-use planners, and developers, gather to discuss the challenge of maintaining biodiversity in the face of ever-increasing urban sprawl. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. For more information, call 313-7220.) ♦ April 13 at 6: Robin Elizabeth Bell, a research scientist with Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, talks about the oysters, sediment, and sunken ships on the bottom of the Hudson River. (New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. 838-0230.) ♦ April 13 at 7: Todd Fisher, publisher of *Napoleon* magazine and co-owner of the military-miniatures manufacturing company Old Glory, talks about Napoleon's return from exile in early 1815. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Lullabies of Broadway



In March, Stephen Sondheim groused to the New York *Times* that Broadway was finished: "You have two kinds of shows … revivals and the same kind of musicals over and over again, all spectacles." But musicals have been spectacles from Broadway's earliest days. According to a new biography of one of musical theatre's first stars, **ANNA HELD AND THE BIRTH OF ZIEGFELD'S BROADWAY** (Kentucky), when the Held vehicle "Miss Innocence" opened in 1908—featuring the actress as a simpering schoolgirl—Florenz Ziegfeld advertised the show with an eight-ton display, which he touted as the "largest sign in America, containing eleven miles of wires and holding twenty-three hundred light bulbs."

Over the next decades, producers grew fat on the musical revue—a soufflé of negligible plots, clumsy lyrics, weak tunes, and bawdy gags. "Success was fluff," Ethan Mordden writes in **BEAUTIFUL MORNIN': THE BROADWAY MUSICAL IN THE 1940S** (Oxford). "Shows were all concoctions, pranks, swindles." Then came the nineteen-forties, and the triumphant arrival of "Oklahoma!," "Carousel," "Kiss Me, Kate," and "South Pacific," all examples of what Mordden calls "that 'Life Is Wonderful Because the Songs Are So Good' mentality."

All the classics are present in Steven Suskin's dazzlingly thorough catalogue raisonné, **SHOW TUNES** (Oxford), along with other musicals that have taken the stage since 1904, from "Fascinating Flora" (1907) and "Fluffy Ruffles" (1908) to "Bar Mitzvah Boy" (1978). And **DECONSTRUCTING HAROLD HILL** (Heinemann) analyzes eight hit plays, from "Camelot" to "March of the Falsettos." Author Scott Miller, a director with a degree in musical theatre from Harvard, believes that hits like "The King and I" and "Ragtime" are "brilliant, surprising, serious works of theatre, no less than *King Lear*."

—*Liesl Schillinger*

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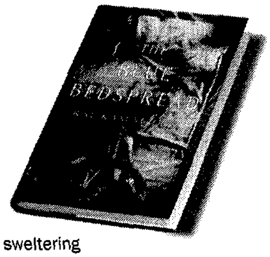
New & Noteworthy



THE BLUE BEDSPREAD

by Raj Kamal Jha

In a striking debut from the young journalist that critics have called "an Indian Raymond Carver," a woman dies in childbirth during the sweltering Calcutta night. As her brother awaits the baby's adoptive parents, he chronicles a legacy of dark family secrets and reminiscences of the mother she will never know. (Random House)

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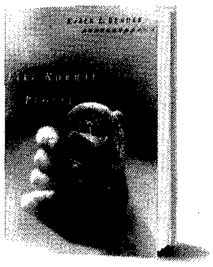

LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE

by Karen E. Bender

Moving deftly between past and present, this novel opens a window into the lives of three women at different stages in life. This touching family drama chronicles the day-long escape of a mentally handicapped woman from her residential home with her young niece, leaving her widowed mother to do some heavy soul searching as she looks for them. (Houghton Mifflin)

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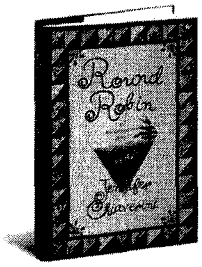

ROUND ROBIN

by Jennifer Chiaverini

The Elm Street Quilters reunite to share the details of their everyday lives while patching together a round robin quilt for their friend Sylvia. In this sequel to *The Quilter's Apprentice*, the women find support among friends as they stitch their collaborative gift. (Simon & Schuster)

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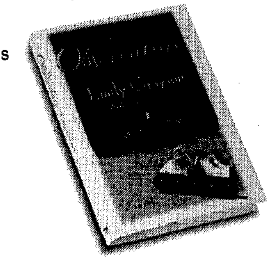
THE OBSERVATORY

by Emily Grayson

Estrangement and reconciliation are the powerful themes in this novel about identical twins leading drastically different lives. A sudden family death forces them to confront their troubled past and overcome their differences but it's a steep uphill battle made even more treacherous when one of the twins falls in love for the first time. (Morrow)



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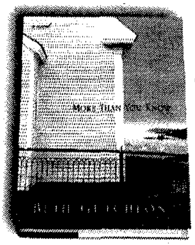

MORE THAN YOU KNOW

by Beth Gutcheon

Spanning two centuries and two tragic relationships, this haunting novel of true love and loss in a Maine town focuses on the parallels between two families. A ghost tale as much as a love story, chapters alternate between narrator Hannah Gray's telling of her passionate first love to the ghost narrator's heartbreaking story of the previous century. (Morrow)

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MOVIES OPENING

AMERICAN PSYCHO
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 14.

EAST IS EAST
A comedy set in seventies England, with Om Puri playing the patriarch of an Anglo-Pakistani family who is trying to raise his six sons and daughter according to traditional ways. Opening April 14.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR
A documentary about Stacy Baker, an Oklahoma housewife who becomes an X-rated-film star. Directed by Christine Fugate. Opening April 14. (The Screening Room.)

KEEPING THE FAITH
In his directorial début, Edward Norton plays a priest whose best friend is a rabbi (Ben Stiller), and they both fall for the same childhood friend (Jenna Elfman). Opening April 14.

SET ME FREE
A coming-of-age story, set in Montreal, about a young girl who identifies with a character in a Jean-Luc Godard film. Directed by Léa Pool. In French. Opening April 14.

THE SPECIALIST
Eyal Sivan and Rony Brauman's documentary of the trial of Adolf Eichman, created entirely from original footage. Opening April 12. (Film Forum.)

28 DAYS
A romantic comedy with Sandra Bullock as a New York reporter who must serve a court-ordered twenty-eight-day stay in a rehab facility. Directed by Betty Thomas. Opening April 14.

WHERE THE MONEY IS
A legendary, ailing bank robber (Paul Newman) teams up with a nurse (Linda Fiorentino) for one last heist. Directed by Marek Kanievska. Opening April 12.

FILM NOTES

If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.

BLACK AND WHITE
James Toback's dangerous comedy is by turns malicious and earnest as it explores relations between whites and blacks in New York's hip-hop community. Oli (Power) Grant plays a thuggish rap entrepreneur at the center of a group that includes a snarly upper-class teen-age girl (Bijou Phillips), a pathetic hanger-on (William Lee Scott), and a married couple in which the husband (Robert Downey, Jr.) is gay and the wife (Brooke Shields) is an earnest bumbler with a video camera. Toback shows interactions between the races as charged but fragmentary, and the gliding camera (David Ferrara did the cinematography) captures the momentary connections. Toback gets at the way certain whites long for danger and excitement, and how blacks who want to leave the ghetto yet remain authentic pop-culture outlaws need whites as an audience. There is much that is inept and clunky here, but at its best the movie has the caught-on-the-run quality of some of Godard's pictures from thirty-five years ago. With Mike Tyson, Knicks star Allan Houston, supermodel Claudia Schiffer, and, as a tormented New York cop, Ben Stiller. Music by Wu-Tang Clan and many others, including Dimitri Shostakovich.—*David Denby* (4/10/00) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly.)

BOILER ROOM
A sensationally entertaining melodrama about young outer-borough louts in Canali suits who sell stocks of dubious value from a fly-by-night brokerage firm. Like "Wall Street" before it, this movie—written and directed by the twenty-seven-year-old Ben Younger—might be described as an ambivalent love letter to the outrageous hustle and greed of the great American bull market. Younger wants us to enjoy the young men's gleeful exhibitionism and powers of persuasion. At the same time, he depicts the brokers' triumphs as a low-life rampage. Amused, clear-sighted, and objective, "Boiler Room" has been made without false piety or hypocrisy. It stars Giovanni Ribisi as a young man lured into the brokerage house, and Ron Rifkin, in a brilliant performance, as his disapproving, federal-judge father. Among the young actors who play brokers, Ben Affleck, Vin Diesel, and Nicky Katt stand out.—*D.D.* (3/13/00) (Art Greenwich Twin, Cinema II, Kips Bay Theatre, and State.)

ERIN BROCKOVICH
This upbeat, inspirational melodrama, based on a true story and directed by Steven Soderbergh, is brought to life by a star on a heavenly rampage. Julia Roberts swings into rooms, ablaze with indignation, her breasts bulging out of her skimpy tops, and rants at the people gaping at her. She's a moral heroine with no sense of propriety—Ralph Nader crossed with Jesse Ventura. Like "A Civil Action" and "The Insider," the movie exposes corporate malfeasance—in this case, that of Pacific Gas & Electric, which for years dumped a lethal chemical called Chromium 6 at its plant in Hinkley, California; the families who lived nearby were diagnosed with multiple cancers. Brockovich, a legal secretary without formal training, leads the charge against the utility corporation, supported by a phlegmatic middle-aged lawyer (Albert Finney) and by her lover (Aaron Eckhart), a hippie-biker dreamboat, bearded but beerless, who takes care of Erin's children while she's out haranguing everybody. Soderbergh's direction goes straight as an arrow, and the movie, though obvious, crude, and even bullying, is raffishly enjoyable and touching.—*D.D.* (3/27/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

EVE
They don't come any tonier than Joseph Losey's masochistic 1963 sexual melodrama about a phony Welsh writer (Stanley Baker) living the dolce vita in the Italy of the Fellini-Antonioni era. He drives his virtuous wife (Virna Lisi) to her death when he can't curb his mad love for a gambling lady (Jeanne Moreau). This destructive dame is named Eve, and the writer's rented house comes complete with a copy of the Masaccio fresco "Expulsion from Paradise." When the camera goes outdoors, it glides among the statuary of Venice and Rome in search of additional metaphors. The new release—made from the only print available of the director's preferred version—is adorned with both Finnish and Swedish subtitles, which actually enhance the arty veneer. The images of the great cinematographer Gianni di Venanzo provide the only genuine emotion in the film, but there are plenty of histrionics. This is the kind of baroque blowout in which the femme fatale whips the antihero with a riding crop while repeatedly calling him a loser.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; April 14-20.)

THE FILTH AND THE FURY
A new documentary about the Sex Pistols by Julien Temple, who has already made "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle." Whether or not the band is an inexhaustible topic remains open to debate. The sight of a sullen and raw-skinned Sid Vicious sitting on a park bench and explaining how good-looking he is will not, perhaps, bear repeated viewings. The film wants Britain to be as reckless and unpredictable as its subject, but this requires a little twisting of the evidence: Britain in the mid-nineteen-seventies was bored and bungling, and, despite what Temple's riotous montage of unrest might suggest, the place was never on the verge of revolution—nothing beyond the musical, at any rate. The surviving band members (including lead singer Johnny Rotten) are filmed in silhouette, as if they were ex-criminals in the Witness Protection Program; this is known as flattery. Still, it is always diverting to watch harmlessly horrible people taking out their frustrations on one another—especially when the mask slips and they temporarily forget to be horrible. The climax of the picture is all anticlimax. Uprooted from home territory, the Sex Pistols withered in the alien soil of America. Their antics have aged badly; how odd, then, that their fistful of hits sound more essential and purgative than ever.—*Anthony Lane* (4/3/00) (Film Forum.)

FINAL DESTINATION
Two alumni of "The X-Files," writer Glen Morgan and director James Wong, make the leap to the big screen and come up with one of the most enjoyable scarefests in years. While boarding an airplane, a high-school student (Devon Sawa) has a premonition that the plane will crash—a hunch later proved explosively correct. He saves the lives of a group of fellow-students, but death won't be cheated, and supernatural forces begin to menace the survivors, one by one. Wong bathes each scene with deep shadows, and the creepy lighting gives the picture a ghastly, nightmarish feel. The "Omen"-like setup (a grisly death every fifteen minutes or so) rolls along like a fun-house ride, and the deaths themselves are designed with the fabulous complexity of Rube Goldberg contraptions. The film is clever enough not to get caught in its own mousetrap; there's a gleeful spirit to the frights delivered here, and the kicker of an ending leaves the audience with a perfect final scream.—*Bruce Diones* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square.)

GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI
Part satire, part comic book, Jim Jarmusch's new film is set in a future that's one beat beyond the present and takes place in a generic cityscape called the Industrialized State. Forest Whitaker stars as a hulking, dangerous, yet curiously gentle samurai known as Ghost Dog. He follows the austere precepts of the samurai code but is also partial to gangsta rap and high-tech weaponry. His master is an Italian Mob underling who serves a family in hilarious decline: they operate out of the back of a Chinese restaurant and cannot make the rent on their social club. Jarmusch keeps the camera moving slowly, attending to details, and the rap soundtrack by RZA (of Wu-Tang Clan fame) gives the whole undertaking a fuguelike quality. When the movie becomes a showdown between two ancient codes—the samurai and *omertà*—Jarmusch playfully aligns the pretend violence of cartoons with the stylized violence of Hollywood, leading to an enigmatic ending that is thoroughly unnerving. It's like an elaborate joke without a punch line. The setup, though, is worth it, thanks to Whitaker's quiet, powerful performance; in Jarmusch's hands he becomes a beacon of purity in a collapsing world.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and State.)

HAIRSPRAY
In this 1988 film, the writer-director John Waters treats the message movie as a genre to be parodied, just like the teen pic. Combining the two, he comes up with a pop Dadaist musical comedy, set in Baltimore in 1962. Waters loves narrative, and he has half a dozen plots crisscrossing each other. In the middle are the spherical Mrs. Edna Turnblad (played by the female impersonator Divine) and her baby-blimp daughter, Tracy (Ricki Lake); they wear matching mother-and-daughter outfits. Tracy, who's the newest teen-age dancer on "The Corny

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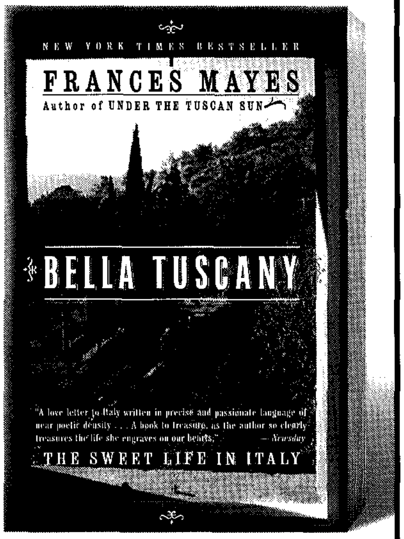
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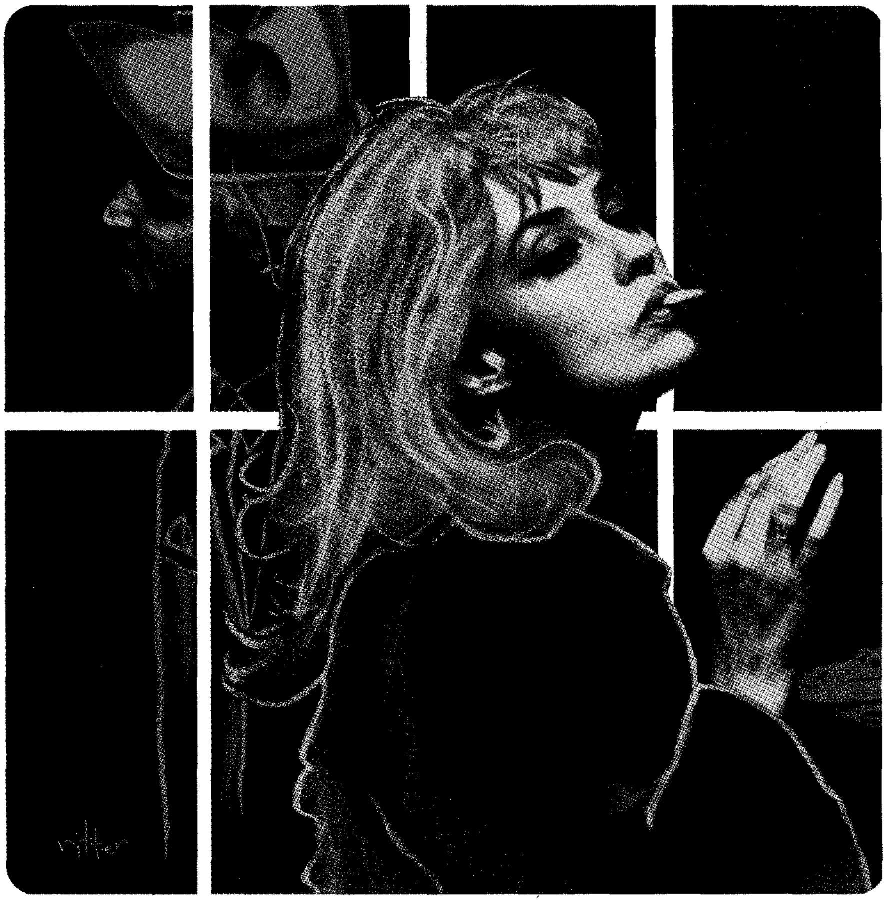

At Film Forum, Joseph Losey's "Eve," with Jeanne Moreau as a mod femme fatale.

Collins Show," discovers that black kids aren't allowed to take part, and she becomes a leader in the fight for integration. Meanwhile, Divine watches over Tracy and preens like a mother hen. There's a what-the-hell quality to Divine's acting that the film needs; it would be too close to a real teen pic without it. When Divine's Edna Turnblad is onscreen in the sleeveless dresses she's partial to, the movie has something like the lunacy of a W. C. Fields in drag.—*Pauline Kael* (Symphony Space; April 18.)

HIGH FIDELITY

A short, sharp movie from Stephen Frears, who may be trying to shake himself awake after the languors of his last film, "The Hi-Lo Country." The source is Nick Hornby's buoyant novel, which was set in North London, but the shift to Chicago feels easy, perhaps because difficulties with girls and a penchant for listing favorite pop songs are universal symptoms of male haplessness. John Cusack stars as Rob, who runs a ratty record store called Championship Vinyl; if anything, the records are more tightly packed in his apartment, which may be why his girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjejle) has just moved out. For most of the picture, they duck and weave, unable to decide whether to stay together; not much happens, and, like Laura, you want things to move on. Yet Frears keeps jump-starting the action with fast cuts, flashbacks, and a jolting current of loud music. (The end credits, which roll to a Stevie Wonder song, send you out on a high.) Why Frears made the film so dark and rain-drenched is something of a mystery; perhaps he was seeking a visual match for the glumness of perpetual adolescence. No love, the film ruefully suggests, will ever be as much fun as a good love song. Fortunately, Cusack and the rest of the cast—notably Jack Black, as a noxious compound of slob and snob—insist, like all good discophiles, on hearing both sides.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Cinema I, Criterion Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

JOE GOULD'S SECRET

The great Ian Holm, rampaging and melancholy, plays Joe Gould, the Greenwich Village bohemian, genius, drunkard, bum, and faker whom the reporter Joseph Mitchell immortalized in two pieces written for this magazine. As Gould, Holm darts around the Village streets and bars like a water bug, displaying the largest vocal and temperamental range of his career so far. As Mitchell, Stanley Tucci, who also directed, is a proper and gracious Southern gentleman both drawn to and exasperated by the wild Gould, who claims to have written an enormous underground history of New York City. Tucci re-creates an older, more generous New York, as mellow as amber, but the heart of the picture is Gould's mysterious hold on Mitchell. Tucci, taking off from a suggestion of Mitchell's, implies that Gould's entertaining shenanigans and spectacular, self-chosen failure may have caused Mitchell to despair of his own writing. In the end, the movie sentimentalizes a baffling, even sinister, ethos of silence. Adapted by Howard A. Rodman.—*D.D.* (4/10/00) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MISSION TO MARS

The last two Martian sorties, courtesy of NASA, have been embarrassing failures, and so is Brian De Palma's first leap into outer space. The film involves two missions: one, led by Luke Graham (Don Cheadle), runs into trouble with an angry sandstorm, whereupon another crew—played by Tim Robbins, Connie Nielsen, Gary Sinise, and Jerry O'Connell—is dispatched to sort out the mess. What promised to be a semi-respectable missing-in-action flick suddenly turns into a hallucinogenic exploration of our earthly, mortal existence, and poor Gary Sinise, who did such sterling work in bringing his imperilled colleagues back to Earth in "Apollo 13," is now obliged to take permanent leave of his senses. The movie is weakly written, sluggishly paced, and performed without gusto; it also happens to be beautifully shot, but the elegance of the camera movements is the only evidence that there used to be intelligent life in Brian De Palma films.—*A.L.* (3/20/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

NOT ONE LESS

In a rural Chinese village, a thirteen-year-old student (Wei Minzhi) becomes an emergency substitute

JOHN RITTER

teacher. When one of her charges, a ten-year-old boy, leaves to find work in a vast, nameless city nearby, she abandons her post, and sets out to find him. The great Chinese director Zhang Yimou shot this film in a style that might be called austere fabulism. He uses documentary techniques—casting nonactors and presenting the raw concrete walls and dirt roads in all their authentic ugliness. Yet the story is shaped like a fable from the silent-film days, and one gets caught up in it. It becomes a slow-motion chase movie, and the persistence of the young teacher gives the film a tone of hilarious monomania. Intentionally or not (it's hard for an outsider to tell), Zhang reveals the meanness and impersonality of contemporary Chinese society.—*D.D.* (2/21-28/00) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ROMEO MUST DIE

Thankfully, we are spared the spectacle of Jet Li whispering sonnets in the moonlight; this film goes nowhere near Shakespeare. It's a slick package of rap music and roundhouse kicks designed to establish Li, already a Hong Kong box-office phenomenon, as the Fred Astaire of fisticuffs. Adhering to a time-honored kung-fu-film tradition, the earnest dialogue and overloaded plot serve only as filler to be endured before the next fight sequence begins. (If you must know: the plot involves two gangs, one Asian, one black, who duke it out on the Oakland waterfront.) Li is a graceful, smooth, and creative performer; a scene in which he destroys five prison guards while blindfolded and suspended by one leg is jaw-dropping. In another, he uses black plastic pull-ties to neutralize a troop of thugs—who knew that hardware stores provided such terrific weaponry? Director Andrzej Bartkowiak adds an inspired touch by showing each of Li's death blows as a slow-motion color X-ray; the anatomically curious can count each vertebra as it is broken in half.—*M.A.* (84th Street Sixplex, 59th Street East Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

WAKING THE DEAD

This earnest romantic movie is sombre and a little gummy, but it holds your attention and the actors gain your sympathy. In the early seventies, Fielding Pierce (Billy Crudup), a Harvard boy in search of a political career, falls in love with a humorlessly dedicated left-wing activist, Sarah Williams (Jennifer Connelly). When she's killed in a terrorist attack while helping refugees from Chile, he goes numb with grief. A decade later, he's running for Congress, still frozen and sad. In the midst of his campaign, he sees Sarah's ghost or her shadow—he definitely sees *something*—and falls apart. For some of us, Sarah was never really the right girl for Fielding, but he doesn't think so, and the movie is a decent attempt to plumb a romantic obsession. The soulful, dark-eyed Connelly is a little thick-tongued; she swallows some of her most important lines. But Crudup goes back and forth between deep reserve and a slightly hysterical emotionalism with impressive skill. Directed with almost too much sensitivity by Keith Gordon. Based on Scott Spencer's novel.—*D.D.* (3/27/00) (Union Square.)

WINTER SLEEPERS

Tom Tykwer wrote and directed this film before his hit "Run Lola Run," and it shares a similar obsession with chance happenings and coincidence. Rene, a young outcast who has lost his short-term memory, steals a sports coupe on a whim. Travelling up an icy mountain road, he swerves to avoid a farmer's station wagon, plunges off an embankment, and walks away from the scene, forgetting everything. The farmer is not so lucky; his daughter is gravely injured. Uncovering the identity of the "other driver" propels the film and eventually connects Rene with three other twentysomethings in the German alpine village: Marco, a blank, womanizing ski instructor; Rebecca, a blond temptress; and Laura, a local nurse. Tykwer displays mesmerizing skill with the camera—it zooms over mountaintops, slinks around corners, and spies from the ceiling. At surprising moments, the action spirals into an all-white screen, and whiteness becomes a recurring motif, a symbol of death and life. The stylistic brilliance is almost enough to distract you from the film's essential flatness. When played

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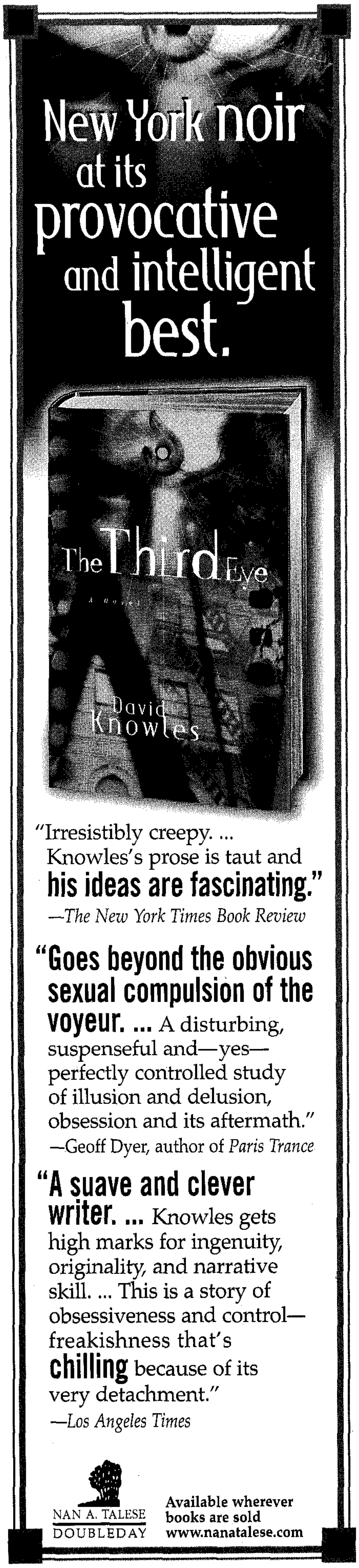
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lightly, this kind of interconnected plot can build wonderful suspense, but when it's overplayed, as it is here, the story's greater resonance gets lost in all the machinations.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center.)

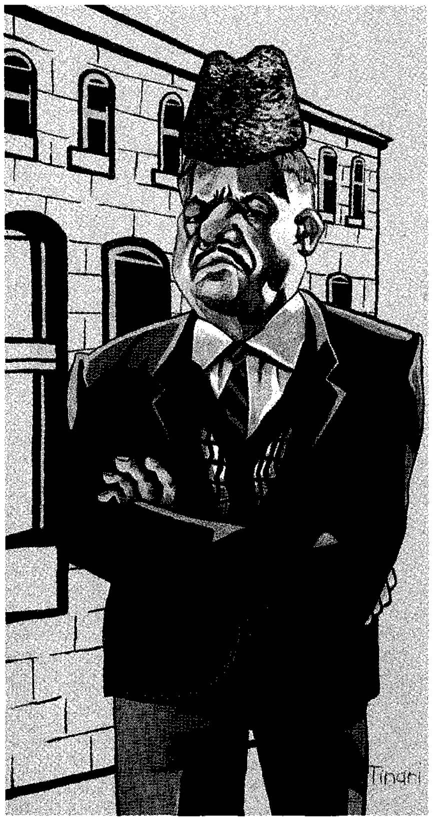
ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (11/22/99)
Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
AMERICAN BEAUTY (9/20/99)
East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, State, Union Square, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.
BEAU TRAVAIL
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
BOYS DON'T CRY (10/18-25/99)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.
THE CIDER HOUSE RULES (12/13/99)
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.
THE COLOR OF PARADISE
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinemas.
EAST-WEST
Paris.
MIFUNE
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
THE ROAD TO EL DORADO
Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.
THE SKULLS
Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.
TOPSY-TURVY (12/27/99-1/3/00)
Art Greenwich Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.



FATHER KNOWS BEST *The Indian actor Om Puri has appeared in more than thirty feature films, where he has built a reputation as a performer of astonishing range. He is best known for his role in "My Son the Fanatic," as a taxi driver whose son becomes an Islamic fundamentalist. "East Is East," a British comedy opening April 14, is Puri's newest film, and he is again contending with wayward sons, only this time they are under the loopy influence of London in the early seventies. Puri's face has aged perfectly for the part of an iron-willed father—he has deep-set eyes and a nose worthy of a ship's prow—but you sense his talent most when this stern mask drops away to register boyish doubt or flickering insecurity, imparting the necessary nuance that lifts this tale of culture clash out of the ordinary.*

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Visions of Modernity: The Films of Fritz Lang." April 15 at 2: "Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, Part 1: The Great Gambler—A Picture of Our Time" (1922; with German intertitles). ♦ April 15 at 5: "Part 2: Inferno—A Play of People in Our Time" (1922; with German intertitles). ♦ April 16 at 2: "Fury" (1936). ♦ April 9 at 4: "The Blue Gardenia" (1953).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Restored prints of Fritz Lang's films. April 14 at 6: "Fighting Hearts, or Four Around a Woman" (1921; with German intertitles). ♦ April 14 at 8: "The Wandering Image" (1920; with German intertitles). ♦ April 15 at 6: "The Woman in the Moon" (1929; with German intertitles). ♦ "The 4th Annual Thessaloniki USA Film Festival," recent cinema from Greece and the Balkans. Highlights are listed here. April 14 at 8: "From the Edge of the City" (1998, Constantine Giannaris; in Greek). ♦ April 14 at 10: "Sweet Bunch" (1983, Nikos Nikolaidis; in Greek). ♦ April 15 at 2: "I, Doll" (1998, Tula Asselanis). ♦ April 15 at 6: "Long Journey by Train" (1998, Sinisa Dragin; in Romanian). ♦ April 15 at 8: "The Robbery" (1999, Alexis Kardaras; in Greek). ♦ April 16 at 6: "Journey to the Sun" (1999, Yesim Ustaoglu; in Turkish). ♦ April 16 at 8: "The Hunt for the Hare" (1999, Nikos Vezirgiannis; in Greek).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—April 12 at 7 and 9:30: "Chikin Biznis . . ." (1999, Ntshavheni Wa Luruli). ♦ April 13 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Wild Reeds" (1994, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ April 14 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Tin Men" (1987, Barry Levinson). ♦ April 15 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Nosferatu the Vampyre" (1979, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ April 16 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Woyzcek" (1978, Herzog; in German). ♦ April 17 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Ice" (1969, Robert Kramer). ♦ April 18 at 7 and 9:30: "Secret Cinema," selections from the Film-Makers' Cooperative.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—April 14-20 at 4:30, 6:45, 8, and 10: "Eve" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—April 13 at 6: "Terrorists in Retirement" (1985, Mosco Boucault; in French), a documentary about Jewish resistance fighters in the Second World War. ♦ "Before Hollywood," six programs of rare early American cinema. April 13 at 3 and April 14 at 8: "America in Transition." ♦ April 14 at 6: "Pleasures and Pitfalls." ♦ April 15 at 2: "Domestic Life." ♦ April 15 at 5: "An Age of Innocence." ♦ April 16 at 2: "Love and Misadventure." ♦ April 16 at 5: "The Frontier Spirit."

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St., at Ave. A. (254-3300)—"Divine Trash" (1997, Steve Yeager).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—April 12-13: "Crane World" (1999, Pablo Trapero; in Spanish). ♦ From April 14: "The Girl Next Door" (2000, Christine Fugate).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway (864-1414)—April 18 at 7: "Hairspray" (†). ♦ April 18 at 8:45: "Cry-Baby" (1990, John Waters).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 4: "Blame Canada!," classic and contemporary Canadian films. April 14 at 6:30 and April 15 at 4:30 and 9: "New Waterford Girl" (1999, Allan Moyle). ♦ April 14 at 8:45, April 15 at 6:45, and April 18 at 8: "Top of the Food Chain" (1999, John Paizs). ♦ April 16 at 4:30 and 8:45: "Kitchen Party" (1997, Gary Burns). ♦ April 16 at 6:30 and April 17 at 3:15 and 8: "Mon Oncle Antoine" (1971, Claude Jutra; in French). ♦ April 17 at 1 and 6: "Réjeanne Padovani" (1973, Denys Arcand; in French). ♦ April 18 at 1 and 6: "Nô" (1998, Robert Lepage; in French).

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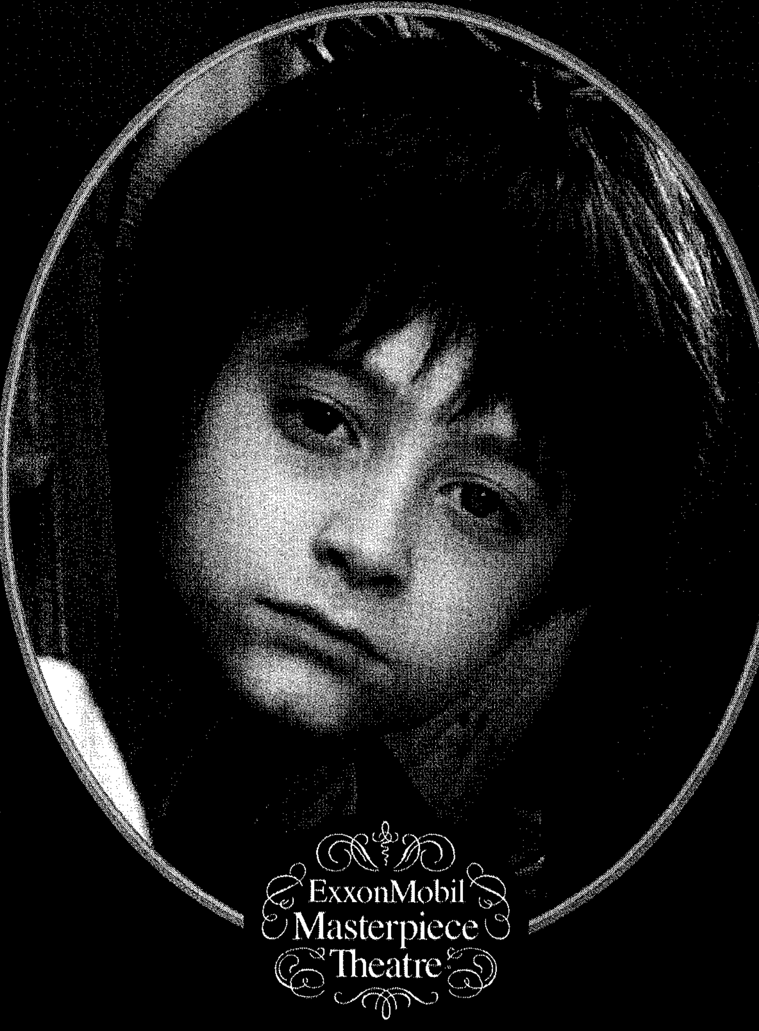

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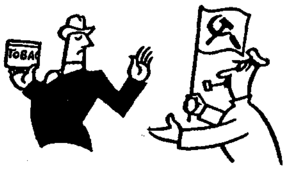
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

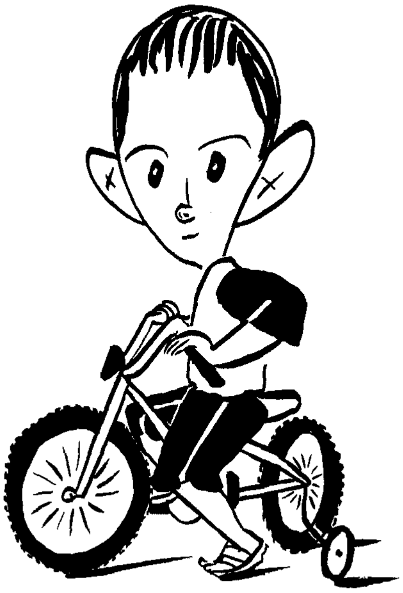
COMMENT
A TALE OF TWO CUBAS



If there's any nostalgia still lingering for the era of the Cold War—that supposed time of moral clarity, when good was good, evil was evil, and transcendent ends overrode qualms about sometimes squalid means—it ought to be laid to rest by the sad struggle over Elián González, the little castaway who has now become the most famous citizen of Cuba apart from Fidel Castro himself. Many of the vices of that era have returned to center stage: self-righteousness; polarization; ideological rigidity; the use of innocents as pawns in games that are anything but innocent; the deployment of false accusations carrying suggestions of treason (soft on Communism! imperialist stooges!); the exaltation of materialisms, dialectical and consumer, over simpler, worthier values. The sufferings of the González family—the mother drowned, the son traumatized and bewildered, the father bereft—are all too real, and, because their scale is comprehensibly small, they are vivid in a way that the sufferings of faceless millions can seldom be. But, if the real Cold War was grand opera, this tiny remnant, this Cold Spat, is operetta, and comic operetta at that. The combatants are not superpowers but a couple of palmy, balmy banana republics: on the one side Cuba, with its absurd world-historical pretensions; on the other the semi-autonomous province of South Florida, a kind of upside-down Taiwan. The nuclear shadow that once darkened every Cuban crisis has lifted, taking existential terror with it. The Soviet Union is gone, and the United States, for its part, is not so much a direct party to the dispute as it is a mediator, trying to keep the shrill squabble between Cuba (Havana) and Cuba (Miami) from breaking the crockery.

The two Cubas have been behaving like mirror images of each other, but they are not, to use a catchphrase of Cold War polemics, morally equivalent. The ultimate cause of the real Cold War was not the arms race, or mutual misunderstanding, or (least of all) Western imperialism; it was the refusal of one side, the Soviet Union, to become what Mikhail Gorbachev used to call, plaintively and rather touchingly, a "normal country." The ultimate (if not the proximate) cause of Cuba's civil cold war is the same. No Castro regime, no crisis—no Helms-Burton Act, no apparitions of the Virgin in Miami bedrooms, no watery *muerte* in the straits between *patria* and Florida.

The Soviet Union was abnormal because it had a messianic ideology that combined what might be called exceptionalist universalism—the idea that it represented the next stage in human history, a quantum leap into an inevitable future—with a political economy made (barely) workable by fear alone. By the late nineteen-eighties, the ideology had become an inherited relic, as moribund as the cult of Jupiter in fifth-century Rome; and, once Gorbachev made it clear that he would never use mass violence to defend the system, the fear dissolved and the party-state withered away. In Cuba, the official ideology still has at least one influential adherent. "I accept with pride that we are a Communist country," Castro told NBC not long ago, adding that Cuba's system "has much more internal support than any system anywhere, because it is more sharing, more fraternal, it is not self-centered, and all the people genuinely participate in its construction and development." The simplest explanation for why Fidel utters such fatuities is that he believes them. As for mass violence, his regime's willingness to use it has


Elián González

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

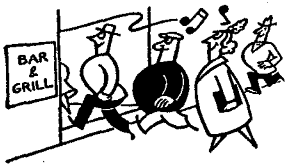
never been tested, thanks largely to the Miami safety valve: Cuba's biggest export, its monocrop, is active discontent.

If Castro is the cause of the trouble, though, it doesn't necessarily follow that endless confrontation with Castro is the solution. To the extent that Western policy brought down the Soviet state, military containment was only half the story; the other half was engagement—political, diplomatic, and economic. The Soviet glacier melted a dozen years ago, but the Caribbean iceberg is still afloat. The policy of embargo has had thirty years to prove itself. No one believes any longer that it is going to end, or even alter, the regime; even those who support it do so for other reasons, mainly because it enables them to strike a pose of romantic heroism. It's not that we can no longer afford such posturing. We can, all too easily. But why not try something different? Can anyone imagine an alternative policy that could fail more abjectly than the present one? To visit Cuba these days is to come away convinced that the embargo has become the main prop of Castro's political legitimacy, to the extent he still has any. That is not why American business interests are increasingly against it, of course; but that is most certainly why the dissidents living in Cuba (as distinct from the Miami diaspora) oppose it—and with something close to unanimity.

The Clinton Administration, in its determination to return Elián to his father, is following a policy that, besides being legally correct, is morally sound. Not all the moral arguments, however, are on one side. Far from it. And no such arguments could be determinative—to use one of Al Gore's Latinate lawyerisms—if sending Elián back would have the effect of keeping the regime in power unchanged for a day longer. But it won't have that effect. Wherever Elián grows up, Cuban Communism will be history by the time he reaches manhood. If the embargo were to be lifted, however, he might not have to wait that long. Conservatives have been suggesting darkly that President Clinton wants to "make a deal with Castro"—that he secretly wants to move toward normalizing relations with Cuba as a feather in the cap of his legacy. Let's hope they're right.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE MUSICAL LIFE
A LONG-LOST BAR INSPIRES A SONG CYCLE



The imaginary bar in "Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill," the eccentric song cycle that was recently released on CD by the saxophone player Roy Nathanson, is based on an organ bar in Charleston, South Carolina, where Nathanson played twenty years ago, as a member of the late Charles Earland's band. Organ bars existed in the back parts of small cities like Newark, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, and they had the kind of big Hammond organs that were too cumbersome for musicians to travel with.

The CD is the score of a theatre piece that Nathanson views as a "plotless radio play that is character-driven." The idea of inventing a calamity in a bar and describing it in a series of songs

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The fund was created for, and is managed by, investors who were traumatized by recent market events, particularly those of us who invested in FreeMoneyforU.com. Investors' funds are conveyed by armored car to a specially constructed vault deep under the Colorado Rockies. Here, investors' cash is lovingly cared for day and night by an experienced staff. Large bills are regularly rotated and dusted, and temperature conditions are maintained at an ideal 65 degrees Fahrenheit, perfect for insuring currency crispness. No return is earned on cash "invested" in the fund, but investors are entitled to visit their money at any time.

The Evans-Takahashi Tax-Managed Gift-Certificate Fund

The fund invests primarily in gift certificates issued by nationally known retail chains. The fund's managers believe that gift certificates offer a reliable hedge against inflation; a hundred-dollar gift certificate is worth a hundred dollars today and will hold its value years from now (unlike certain overvalued Internet stocks such as FreeMoneyforU.com), subject only to the risk that the issuing retail chain will go belly up.

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The fund invests primarily in small hedges and the occasional bush. The fund is currently almost fully invested in yew and scrub-oak hedges, as the fund's investment adviser, Chuck's Garden Center, Inc., of La Jolla, California, believes that yew and scrub oak hold their value during cyclical bear markets better than, say, forsythia, clematis, or such once high-flying Internet stocks as FreeMoneyforU.com.

The Owen-Templemore Coupon Fund

"We're bullish on coupons," say co-managers Lars Owen and Buster (Bud) Templemore. Coupons do not, over time, lose their value, like stocks or bonds or certain Internet stocks, including such highly overvalued stocks as FreeMoneyforU.com. Coupons can be exchanged for "discounts" on useful and potentially valuable merchandise with which you may need to stock your personal fortified shelter during any civil unrest. The fund generally invests only in coupons offered by purveyors of nationally known brands, and does not hold any of the "net-pons" offered by those bastards at FreeMoneyforU.com.

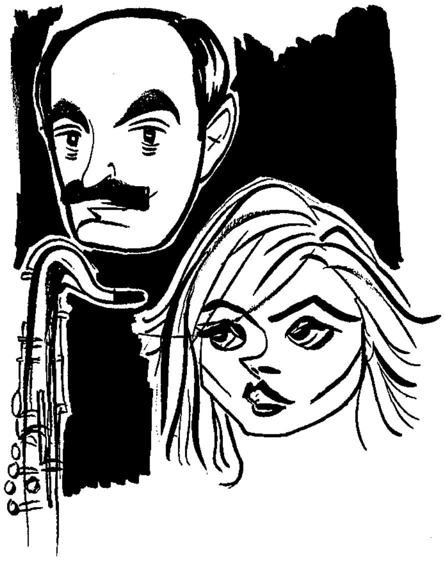
—*Jay Itzkowitz*

came to Nathanson about two years ago, shortly after he learned that Deborah Harry was about to leave his band, the Jazz Passengers, which she had sung with since 1994, in order to tour with Blondie, her rock-and-roll band. This meant that the Jazz Passengers would have some time on their hands. Nathanson remembered the bar in South Carolina. "In all the other bars I played in with Charles Earland, the trumpet player and I were always the only white people," he says. "But this bar was black and white, and the Clash was on the jukebox with Tammy Wynette and John Coltrane, and it was a haven." He mentioned the idea of the bar and the disaster to his friend Ray Dobbins, a writer and lyricist. "He's Irish," Nathanson says, "and he's a bar person, and he knows bar talk." In addition to writing the lyrics for some of the songs, Dobbins wrote the liner notes, which depict Keaton's and the night of the fire.

By means of set pieces that are a mixture of tango, funk, straight-ahead jazz, and modern composition, and that are sung by nine of the bar's customers, the songs portray the bar and the winter night it caught fire and left everyone standing on the sidewalk, watching it burn to the ground. The fire dispersed them, and they never gathered anywhere again. Richard Butler, a member of the Psychedelic Furs, plays a character named Richard Blair, who is suspected of starting the fire. Deborah Harry plays Cups, "the bartender everyone is in love with."

Nathanson was born in Brooklyn in 1951. His mother was a classical pianist, and his father played the saxophone in big bands. "A third-chair kind of guy," Nathanson says. "He would go to the union hall Saturday night looking for work. He also had a construction business. When I was a kid, I mainly practiced the clarinet and played basketball. I didn't read a book until I was in the tenth grade." In 1984, Nathanson joined the Lounge Lizards. "At the same time," he says, "I was reading a lot of theatre; I read thousands of plays. All I really cared about was music, and its relationship to theatre, whatever that means." In 1987, he started the Jazz Passengers with Curtis Fowlkes, a trombone player from the Lounge Lizards. Elvis Costello liked the Jazz Passengers and invited them to perform at a festival he was producing. In "Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill," Costello plays Singleton, who is the narrator and is obscurely described in the CD's notes as "the guy with the car."

On May 5th and 6th, Nathanson and Costello and Harry and sixteen other musicians and actors will present what Nathanson calls "an onstage realization" of "Fire at Keaton's" at St. Ann's, in Brooklyn, as part of the Arts at St. Ann's SpringWorks 2000 series, the arts festival that has included new works and performances by David Byrne, Philip Glass, Lou Reed, and Beth Orton. To prepare, Nathanson plays songs from "Keaton's" with a big band on occasional nights at Tonic, a club on Norfolk Street, on the Lower East Side. The elements of "Keaton's" keep changing, as characters assert themselves in different ways. This is intentional but also anxiety-making. "When I started, I didn't want the plot to be so clear that it was inflexible," Nathanson says. "I wanted a theatre piece that would grow from the sound up, rather than the other way around. What's happening as we rehearse is that Ray and I have become detectives trying to find the perfect plot. We have faith that when we finally get everyone on the stage together the clues will combine, and we'll be introduced to the remaining mysteries."



Roy Nathanson and Deborah Harry

—*Alec Wilkinson*

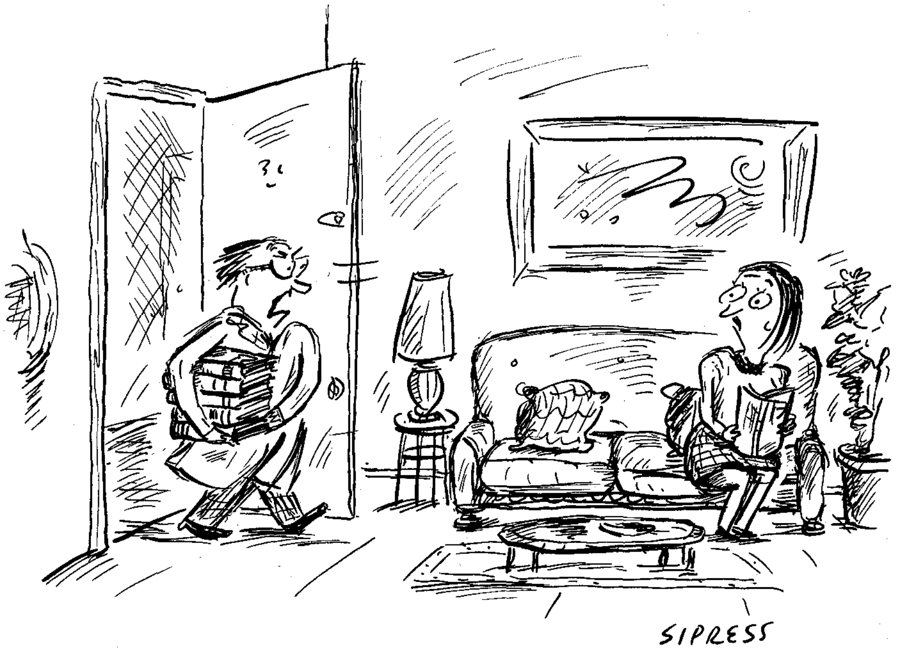
DEPT. OF SEEING STARS

A CHICAGO CHOP SHOP TAKES THE HAYDEN'S GUTS

There are plenty of stars at the new Hayden Planetarium, but some visitors can't help thinking about the one heavenly body that's missing: the massive, bug-eyed projector that reigned over the old Hayden for thirty years. A rangy, robotic ringmaster, the Zeiss Mark VI, made in West Germany in the sixties, looked like something a twelve-year-old could build with a pile of Erector sets, a couple dozen camera lenses, and a few hundred lawnmower engines. It was the kind of lovable gizmo the Hayden's sleek new equipment can't match.

The machine cost about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and had more than twenty-nine thousand parts. These days, most of those parts can be found in the cluttered office of Pat Frendreis, in the basement of the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. It was Frendreis who, after the Hayden decided it had no use for the machine, arranged to move it to Chicago for the cost of shipping (about eighteen hundred dollars). He organized the transfer on behalf of a consortium of the five American planetariums that still use the Mark VI, for which Zeiss no longer makes components. The Hayden's machine has become an organ donor, a source of parts to help keep the other vintage projectors going. "There's a gentleman's agreement that each part will go to whichever planetarium needs it the most," Frendreis said the other day. "But since I'm doing all the work I have dibbies on some of the best parts."

Those parts include the spherical ends of the dumbbell-shaped machine. They're called starballs, although Frendreis, who is forty-eight, doesn't use the technical terminology around teen-agers. "High-school boys always giggle when you say starballs," Frendreis said, giggling. When the Mark VI was in operation, each starball contained a thousand-watt street-light bulb, which shone through pinholes in photographic plates;



"It's National Poetry Month, Marion, and by God we're gonna read some poetry."

• •

together, the two balls, representing the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, could project nearly eight thousand stars on the Hayden's ceiling. Gesturing toward one of the two three-foot-wide spheres, Frendreis said, "It's an icon." He imagines that someday, when the consortium finally retires its old Mark VIs, a starball might end up in his front room—"that's what we Midwesterners call the nicest room in the house."

The new Zeiss Mark IX now in place in Manhattan is run by computers, but Frendreis isn't impressed. "The Mark VI is an analog machine," he said. "And it's an analog universe. There's nothing digital about the way stars move through space."

Frendreis figures that his chop shop can keep the Adler's own Mark VI running for at least another decade. But the machine is less likely to succumb to metal fatigue than to changing tastes. "No one's showing stars at planetariums anymore," Frendreis said ruefully. These days, most planetariums feature "Star Wars"-like shows, such as the Hayden's new "Passport to the Universe," which, despite the shiny new Zeiss, is mostly accomplished with video projectors. Frendreis thinks that those machines are O.K. "if you like fancy-schmancy effects." But, he says, they don't show stars as well as a Mark VI does. "You're looking at a video image, so the stars are greenish and soft," he said. "The Zeiss gives you *real* stars."

—*Fred Bernstein*

POSTSCRIPT
A BRAVE HAITIAN VOICE

Jean Dominique was shot seven times in the head, neck, and chest by two assailants last week as he arrived at his radio station just after six in the morning. He died a few minutes later. Ten years ago, when I was in Haiti writing a book about the post-Duvalier era, I met Jean and his wife, Michele Montas, who worked with him on his merciless political commentary. He was light-skinned and light-eyed, and she looked like Simone Signoret, only a lot better.

As one of the most prominent radio journalists in a country where radio is king, Jean knew everyone in Haiti. He could gossip about every illicit love affair of the past half century, and about every foible of human nature as evidenced by his fellow-Haitians, especially by members of what is known in Haiti as "*la classe*," meaning the political élite, or, as Jean might have said, the fools and phonies who engage in politics.

He broadcast his radio show six mornings a week. To understand it, you had to follow the intricate plots of the latest horrendous fuckups in Haitian politics. Jean had been beaten by Jean-Claude Duvalier's police and forced into exile twice; his brother was killed by Papa Doc during a coup attempt. He supported Jean-Bertrand Aristide when the priest was elected president in 1990, but he was quick to raise his voice against any abuse he detected in the circles of power.

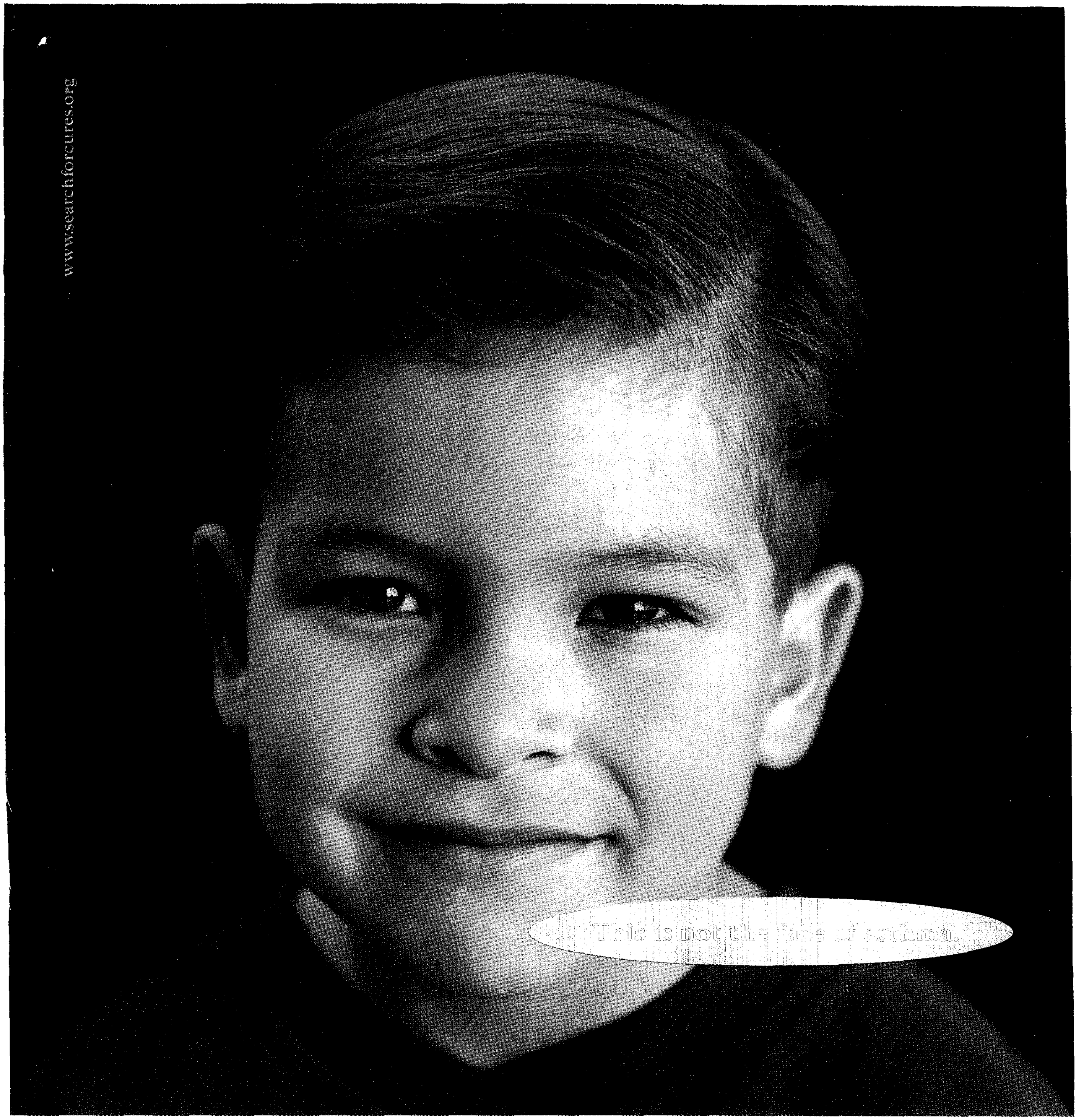
Speaking truth to power is a dangerous game in Haiti. Jean knew the rules, but he thought, after all these years, that he was untouchable—at sixty-nine, too old to matter, and too well known to be a target. He was wrong. Although Haiti is ostensibly an electoral democracy now, its president is weak, and its legislature nonexistent. A new round of elections has been postponed repeatedly, and armed gangs use a free hand with the population.

Jean expected better. "I have no patience for people who talk with a pistol in their hand," he told a mutual friend, a reporter for *Le Monde*, a few weeks before he died.

Recently, he aimed his diatribes at the volatile thugs who've been hovering over the centers of power in Haiti for the past three or four years, and someone must have resented it enough to strike back. It doesn't cost much to hire a hit man in Haiti—estimates range from as little as a hundred and fifty dollars to maybe fifteen hundred dollars when the target is someone as prominent as Jean. And the risks are low: almost no one in Haiti has ever been caught and prosecuted for an assassination, although assassinations and coups have been the primary methods of changing governments.

Jean's killing shows that no one is off limits now. "No person, no problem," as Stalin liked to say. Traditionally, on the day that a coup d'état takes place in Haiti, the perpetrators close the airport and shut down the radio stations. With Jean out of the way, they'll only have to close the airport now.

—*Amy Wilentz*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

IS MICROSOFT BAD OR JUST MISUNDERSTOOD?

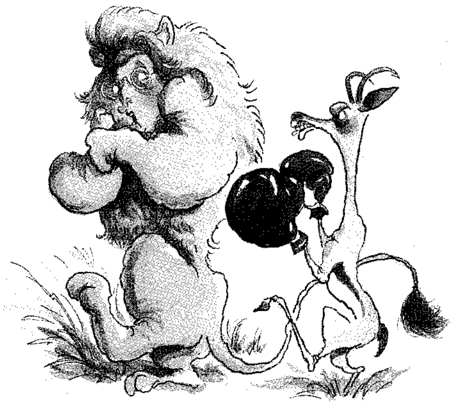
"Predatory," which you can find sprinkled liberally throughout Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's ruling in the Microsoft antitrust case, is an evocative word. You can almost see the rustle of tall grass as the lion stalks the capering gazelle across the savanna. And, given the litany of antitrust violations of which Jackson found Microsoft guilty, it's easy enough to imagine the carnivore's deadly pounce—the extended claws, the plaintive bleat.

But the rewards of "predatory action" are more straightforward in the Serengeti than in Silicon Valley. When you're a business predator—when your main objective is to destroy your competitors, rather than maximize current profits—you tend to sacrifice so much in the hunt (by slashing prices, or annoying venders with aggressive tactics) that you end up weaker than when you began. What's more, a firm that looks as if it could earn big profits if it survives your marauding will find itself a whole army of allies, in the form of outside investors. One lesson of antitrust history is that predation seldom ends in profit. Certainly it's a lesson of the Microsoft case.

Not that Judge Jackson took much notice of it. Microsoft, he decided, unlawfully undermined Netscape's Web-browser business—for example, by giving away its own Web browser with its Windows operating system. And why was Microsoft so intent on winning the browser battle? Because, the judge concluded, Netscape ultimately posed a threat to Windows, which has ninety-five per cent of the market for PC operating systems. Microsoft's main concern wasn't to dominate a new market but to protect an old one.

This idea didn't come out of thin air. Five years ago, Bill Gates was warning his colleagues that Netscape could end up "commoditizing" the operating system; another Microsoft exec suggested that the Netscape browser could, in Siliconspeak, "obsolete Windows." In this scenario, you wouldn't require an expensive PC on your desk, packed with separate copies of all the applications you need to make it through the day—WordPerfect, Excel, Solitaire, whatever. Instead, you'd have a cheap little box equipped with little more than a browser and a modem. Boot it up and, instead of that Windows wind chime and four-color panel, Netscape's blue-and-white logo would fill the screen. You'd run the programs you needed over the Internet; you could store your files on the Internet, too. Just as you can shop at Amazon without your own copy of its software, you'd be able to use any program you wanted no matter where you were. Before you know it . . . *Windows? The name sort of rings a bell.* And Bill Gates wakes up screaming.

Netscape, at least for a little while, believed it could happen. Microsoft believed it could happen. Judge Jackson should probably be forgiven for believing it, too. But the capital markets knew better. If Netscape's browser really had the potential to morph into a virtual operating system, people would have been banging on its doors, begging to be allowed to invest. This year, Microsoft will likely sell more than nine billion dollars' worth of operating-system products, and fully six billion dollars of it will be profit. If Netscape were poised to take even a fraction of that, Microsoft could not have won simply through predation. In its entire history, after all, Netscape has lost only a hundred million dollars—a pittance compared with what companies pay to enter much smaller markets. Investors could easily have hung in and kept Netscape flourishing.



Instead, they essentially abandoned Netscape. This doesn't mean that Microsoft is irresistibly powerful. It means that the market recognized that the browser war was just that, a war over browsers, and not a war over operating systems. And in the browser war you could have a winner without any winnings. The browser was to become the equivalent of the spell-check function on your word processor, or the heating in your car: something consumers expect, not something they'll pay extra for.

Even within Netscape, people quickly gave up on the dream of turning the browser into a true Web-based alternative to Windows. Java, the programming language that was key to that dream, proved too slow and too unstable. Internet access was and remains too unreliable for people to abandon their trusty hard drives. The cost of PCs fell so quickly that any price advantage of a Web-only machine pretty much vanished. By late 1997, Netscape was already shifting its attention from its browser to the more lucrative business of corporate software. It would hardly have done so if it thought it was giving up the computing platform of the future. Sometimes a browser is just a browser.

All this casts doubt on Judge Jackson's assertion that Microsoft "maintained its monopoly power by anticompetitive means." Of course, monopolists can be predatory without good reason. And if the market for which they're competing is relatively small—like the browser market, in terms of profits—predation may even help them succeed (though almost no company succeeds through predation alone). Then again, if the market is small the monopolist is probably better off not trying to dominate it in the first place. Microsoft's campaign against Netscape ended up as one of those costly "Paths of Glory" battles over some relatively worthless piece of turf. Bill Gates entered the battle because he thought his Windows monopoly might be at stake. He won handily because it wasn't. The result, of course, has been to put his company in jeopardy. In the words of the Kinks, "Paranoia, the destroyer."

—*James Surowiecki*

MICHAEL WITTE

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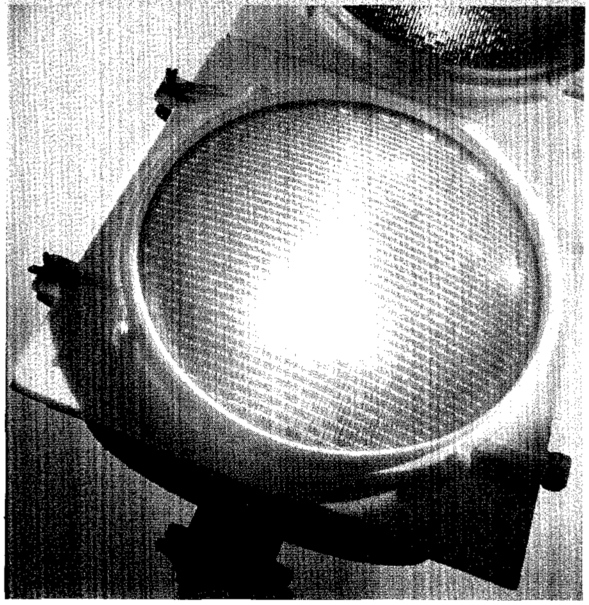

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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

AFTER SEATTLE

Anarchists get organized.

BY WILLIAM FINNEGAN

For Juliette Beck, it began with the story of the Ittu Oromo, Ethiopian nomads whose lives were destroyed, in vast numbers, by a dam—a hydroelectric project sponsored by the World Bank. Beck was a sophomore at Berkeley, taking a class in international rural development. The daughter of an orthopedic surgeon, she had gone to college planning to do premed, but environmental science caught her interest, and the story of the Ittu Oromo precipitated a change of major. Beck was a brilliant student—"One of these new Renaissance people, so smart they could be almost anything," a former professor of hers recalls. She was intellectually insatiable, and her eagerness to understand the dynamics of economic development propelled her into several academic fields, notably the dry, dizzying politics of international finance and trade. By her junior year, she was teaching a class on the North American Free Trade Agreement. "It was one of the most popular student-led classes we've had," her professor says. "I understand it's been cloned on other campuses."

Beck had found her strange grand passion—international trade rules—at an auspicious time. Besides the popularity of her class, there were the events last November in Seattle, where fifty thousand demonstrators shut down a major meeting of the World Trade Organization. Beck, who is twenty-seven, was a key organizer of the Seattle protests.

"The Spirit of Seattle," she says, crinkling her eyes and grinning blissfully. "Your body just tingled with hope, to be around so many people so committed to making a better world." Beck says things like "tingled with hope" and "making a better world" with no hint of self-consciousness, and in the next breath will launch into a critique of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, a set of international trade rules that she and other activists have fought against for the last several years. (The M.A.I. would limit the rights of national governments to regulate currency speculation or set policies regarding investment.) This odd fusion of hardheaded policy analysis and utopian idealism has an exhilarating edge, which may account for some of Beck's habitual high spirits.

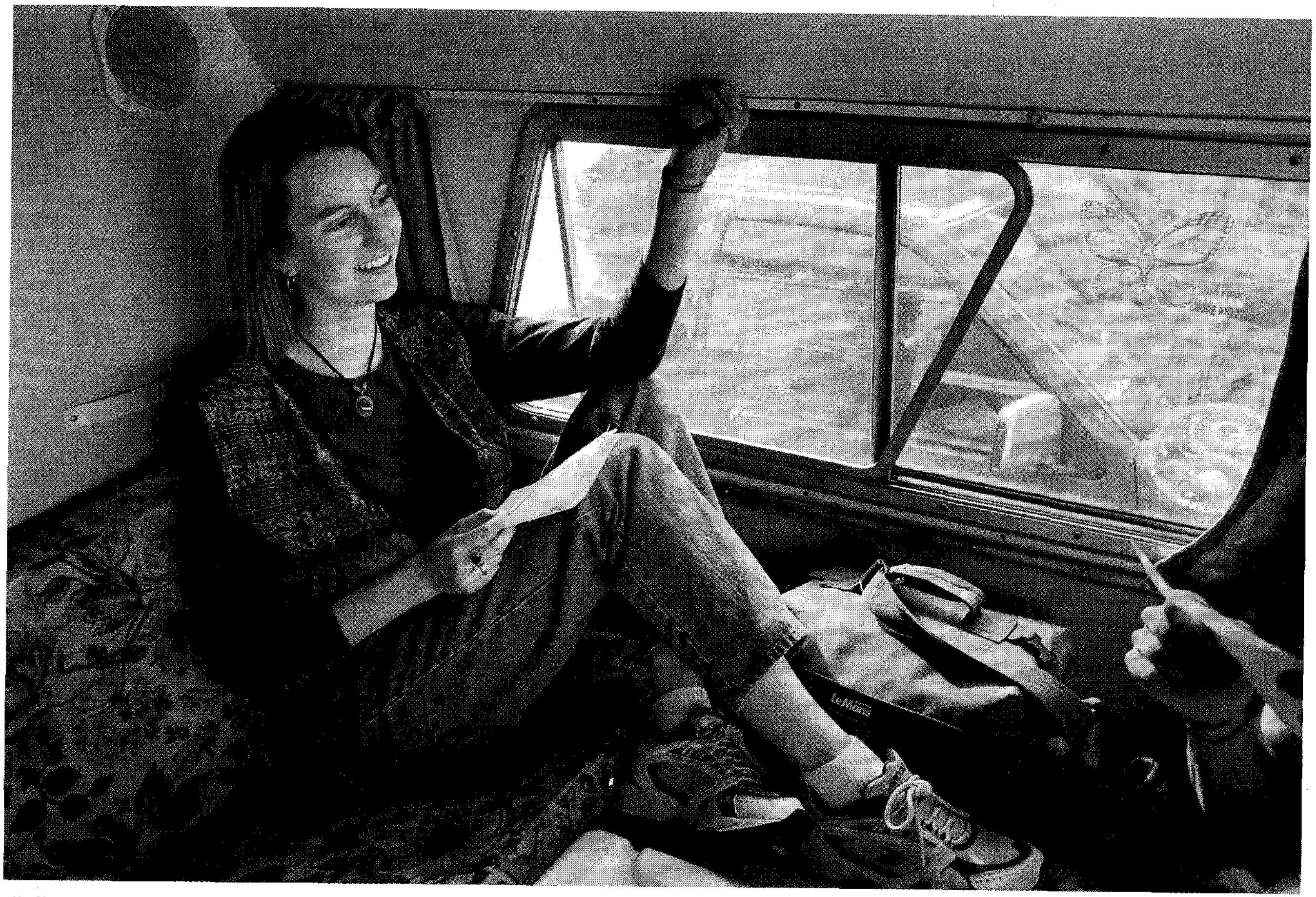
Almost six feet tall, she retains, to a striking degree, both the coltishness of adolescence and the open-faced, all-American social style of the Girl Scout and high-school athlete (volleyball, tennis, basketball) she was. Zooming around the scruffy, loft-style offices of Global Exchange, the human-rights organization in San Francisco where she works, she seems conspicuously lacking the self-décor of the other young activists around the place—piercings, tattoos, dreadlocks. It may be that she's simply been too busy to get herself properly tatted up. While we were talking in her office on a recent evening, she tried to deal simultaneously with me and with a significant fraction of the seven hundred E-mail messages that had piled up in her in-box—reading, forwarding, filing, trashing, replying, sighing, grumbling, erupting in laughter. She was determined, she said, to have an empty in-box before she left, in a few days' time, for Washington, D.C., even if it meant pulling consecutive all-nighters.

"Where I grew up, in suburban San Diego, it was so strange," she said. "Politics didn't exist. The only political gesture I ever saw there was during the Gulf War. People drove around waving American flags from the backs of pickups. That was it. When we were teen-agers, the consumerism was overwhelming. If you didn't wear Guess jeans, you didn't exist. When I got to Berkeley, I was just like a *sponge*. At one point, I realized that, in my entire education, having gone through good public schools, advanced-placement programs, and all that, I had never learned anything about the American labor movement. Nothing. I don't think I ever heard the term 'collective bargaining' inside a classroom.

No wonder we were all so apolitical!"

After college, Beck went to work as an environmental engineer for a small Bay Area firm. The pay was good, and the work was interesting, but she found herself spending most of her time competing with other firms for contracts. "It made me realize I didn't want to be doing work that was all about money." So she made the downward financial leap into the non-profit sector (and was recently forced to move from chic, expensive San Francisco to cheaper, inconvenient Oakland, where she lives in a group house with no living room). It's a step she says she's never regretted. "I think a lot of people in my generation—not a majority, maybe, but a lot—feel this void," she told me. "We feel like capitalism and buying things are just not fulfilling. Period." She became an organizer for Public Citizen, Ralph Nader's consumer group, which was campaigning, along with labor unions and other allies, to stop the Clinton Administration's effort to get renewed "fast track" authority to negotiate trade agreements with limited congressional oversight. (The problem with such authority, according to its opponents, is its bias, in practice, in favor of industry.) The campaign was successful—the first major defeat in Congress for trade advocates in sixty years. "That was a great victory," Beck said happily. "We defeated some of the most powerful forces on the planet."

Those powerful forces, once they had recovered from the shock, responded with a public-relations offensive. William Daley, the Secretary of Commerce, embarked on a National Trade Education Tour, meant to persuade the American people of the wisdom of free trade. Daley was met by protesters at every stop. In Los Angeles, Beck helped coördinate his unofficial reception. "We just *dogged* him." Longshoremen refused to coöperate with the Secretary, she said, for what she called "a photo op at the docks." She went on, "They said, 'No way, come down to our headquarters and we'll have an honest discussion on trade.' He said no. These fat cats only want to talk on their terms. Even the kids at a high school in Long Beach where Daley spoke asked him tough questions. We really caused that tour to flop. Daley had a bus full of C.E.O.s and flacks from the Business Roundtable, but a lot of bigwigs flaked when they saw how hokey the whole thing was." Six corporate leaders, including the chairmen of Boeing and A.T.&T., had in fact appeared with Daley at the tour's kickoff, then made themselves scarce when it began to smell of disaster.



Juliette Beck, of Global Exchange, on a three-week road show to organize demonstrations in Washington on April 16th: "If we're talking about the World Bank, I am an abolitionist." Photograph by Gilles Peress.

MAGNUM

Beck's delight in such disasters is wicked and shameless. I recalled a news story she had circulated by E-mail a few weeks before. The story was about Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, getting hit in the face by a fruit-and-cream pie just before he gave a farewell speech to mark his retirement. Beck's cover note exulted, "The head of I.M.F. got his just desserts this weekend—a parting pie shot!"

Beck likes to call the I.M.F., the W.T.O., and the World Bank "the iron triangle of corporate rule." In her view, these institutions—their leaders, clients, political allies, and, above all, true bosses, multinational corporations—are frogmarching humanity, along with the rest of the planet, into a toxic, money-maddened, repressive future. And she intends to persuade the rest of us not to go quietly.

In her office at Global Exchange, still crashing through the underbrush of her in-box, she suddenly pulled up short. "Oh, check this out," she said, and pointed to her computer screen. "Have you seen this?"

I had. It was a report prepared by Burson-Marsteller, the Washington publicity firm, which had been leaked and was making the electronic rounds. It was titled "Guide to the Seattle Meltdown: A Compendium of Activists at the W.T.O. Ministerial." Burson-Marsteller's cover letter began, "Dear [Corporate Client]," and characterized the report "not so much as a retrospective on the past, but as an alarming window on the future." The report offered profiles of dozens of groups that had participated in the Seattle protests—from the Anarchist Action Collective to Consumers International to the A.F.L.-C.I.O.—naming leaders, giving Web-site addresses, and including brief descriptions, usually lifted from the literature of the groups themselves. The cover letter mentioned possible "significant short-term ramifications for the business community" because of the "perceived success of these groups in disrupting Seattle" and, more portentously, warned of "the potential ability of the emerging coalition of these groups to seriously impact broader, longer-term corporate interests."

Burson-Marsteller was at least trying to reckon with what had been revealed in Seattle. The press, the Seattle authorities, the Clinton Administration, the W.T.O., and many other interested parties had largely been ignorant of the popular movement being built around them. Suddenly challenged, everyone had scrambled to respond, some (the police) attacking the protesters, others (Bill Clinton) rhetorically embracing them (while his negotiators continued to pursue in private the controversial policies he was renouncing in public), but all basically hoping that the problem—this nightmare of an aroused, mysteriously well-organized citizenry—would just go away. Burson-Marsteller knew better. Its "compendium" had even picked up on demonstrations being planned for April against the World Bank and the I.M.F. during meetings in Washington, D.C. This was before anything about those demonstrations had appeared in what movement activists insist on calling the corporate press.

I say "movement activists" because nobody has yet figured out what to call them. Sympathetic observers refer to them as "the Seattle coalition," but this title reflects little of the movement's international scope. In the United States, the movement is dramatically—even, one could say, deliberately—lacking in national leaders. It is largely coördinated on-line. I picked Juliette Beck almost at random as a bright thread to follow through this roiling fabric of rising, mostly youthful American resistance to corporate-led globalization.

Global free trade promotes global economic growth. It creates jobs, makes companies more competitive, and lowers prices for consumers. It also provides poor countries, through infusions of foreign capital and technology, with the chance to develop economically and, by spreading prosperity, creates the conditions in which democracy and respect for human rights may flourish.

This is the animating vision of the Clinton Administration, and it is a view widely shared by political leaders, economic decision-makers, and opinion-makers throughout the West. It is also accepted, at least in its outlines, by many important figures in business and government in Third World countries, where it is known as "the Washington consensus."

Critics of this consensus dispute most, if not all, of its claims. Growth, they argue, can be wasteful, destructive, unjust. The jobs created by globalization are often less sustaining and secure than the livelihoods abolished by it. Weak economies abruptly integrated into the global system do not become stronger, or develop a sustainable base; they just become more dependent, more vulnerable to the ructions of ultravolatile, deregulated international capital. In many countries, the benefits of economic growth are so unequally distributed that they intensify social and political tensions, leading to increased repression rather than to greater democracy. To the hoary trope that a rising tide lifts all boats, critics of corporate-led globalization retort that in this case it lifts only yachts.

Nearly everyone, though, on both sides of the globalization debate, accepts that the process creates winners and losers. And it is globalization's losers and potential losers—and all those with doubts about the wisdom of unchecked, unequal growth—who propel the backlash that found such vivid expression in Seattle. One odd aspect of that backlash is the ideological opposites it contains. American right-wing isolationists of the Patrick Buchanan variety are as hostile to the international bodies that promote economic globalization as they are to the United Nations. In Britain, unreconstructed Tories continue to loathe and oppose the European Union, a prime mover of globalization. Meanwhile, young British anarchists also hate the E.U., and the bulk of the Seattle coalition is being drawn from the American liberal and radical Left.

The booming popularity of the movement on college campuses is another odd aspect of its makeup, since American college graduates are unlikely to find themselves, even in the short term, on the losing side of the great globalization ledger. And yet students, whether fired up by their coursework, like Beck, or simply sensing that this is where the subcultural action is now, have been turning out in surprising numbers for mass "teach-ins" on the W.T.O., the I.M.F., and the World Bank—even eagerly swallowing solid doses of the economic history and international financial arcana that come unavoidably with these topics.

Kevin Danaher, a co-founder of Global Exchange, sees nothing incongruous about young people getting excited about the dismal science. "Economics and politics have been kept falsely separate, traditionally," he says. "We're just trying to drag capital-investment decision-making out into the public realm. That's the terrain of struggle now. The anti-apartheid divestment campaign set the precedent."

Danaher, who in a doctoral dissertation examined the political economy of United States policy toward South Africa, was one of the leaders of the American divestment campaign. Since that campaign's contribution to ending apartheid and bringing democracy to South Africa can scarcely be overstated, his bullishness about the prospects for democratizing the rules of the new global economy may be understandable. He talks, somewhat messianically, about replacing the "money cycle" with the "life cycle," but then puts his

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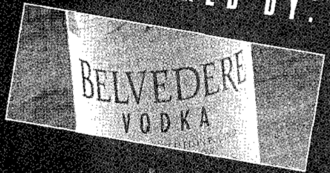


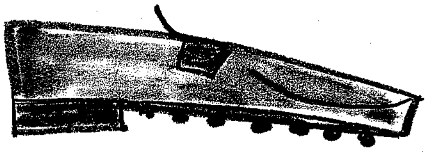
ideas to the test by running a bustling nonprofit business. Global Exchange, besides its human-rights research and activism—it has mounted corporate-accountability campaigns, targeting Nike, the Gap, and, starting this month, Starbucks for their international labor practices—operates two stores in the Bay Area, plus an on-line store, selling crafts and coffee and other goods bought directly, on demonstrably fair terms, from small producers in poor countries; it also offers "reality tours" of such countries as Cuba, Haiti, and Iran to high-disposable-income travellers not yet ready for cruise ships.

Addressing young audiences, Danaher—who is forty-nine, has a shaved head and a white goatee, and retains enough of the speech patterns of a working-class New Jersey youth to carry off the most populist harangue—makes a cross-generational pitch. He acknowledges the difficulty of understanding what it is that an institution like the World Bank even does, but then urges people to educate themselves and, in recent speeches, to come to Washington in April. "It's going to be Woodstock times ten," he told one college class, pulling out the stops. "I was at Woodstock, I was at Seattle, and Seattle changed *my* butt."

The World Bank lends money to the governments of poor countries. It was founded, along with the International Monetary Fund, after the Second World War to help finance the reconstruction of Europe. When the Marshall Plan usurped its original purpose, the Bank had to reinvent itself, shifting its focus to Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where the elimination of poverty became its declared mission. This was the first in a long series of institutional costume changes. Today, the Bank, which is headquartered in Washington, D.C., has more than ten thousand employees, a hundred and eighty member states, and offices in sixty-seven of those countries, and lends nearly thirty billion dollars a year. It ventures into fields far beyond its original mandate, including conflict resolution—demobilizing troops in Uganda, clearing land mines in Bosnia. The I.M.F., whose founding purpose was to make short-term loans to stabilize currencies, has similarly had to shape-shift with the times. Also headquartered in Washington, it now makes long-term loans as well and tries to manage the economies of many of its poorer member states.

Both institutions have always been dominated by the world's rich countries, particularly the United States. During the Cold War, this meant that loans were often granted on a crudely political basis. Indeed, the World Bank's first loan—two hundred and fifty million dollars to France, in 1947—was withheld until the French government purged its Cabinet of Communists. In the Third World, friendly dictators were propped up by loans. Robert McNamara, after presiding over the Vietnam War, became president of the World Bank in 1968, and he expanded its operations aggressively, pushing poor countries to transform their economies by promoting industrialized agriculture and export production. There were fundamental problems with this development model. By the time McNamara retired, in 1981, his legacy consisted largely of failed megaprojects, populations no longer able to feed themselves, devastated forests and watersheds, and a sea of hopeless debt.

Bank officials have consistently vowed to improve this record, to start funding projects that benefit not only big business and Third World élites but also the world's poor. Accordingly, projects with non-governmental organizations and other "civil society" groups, along with efforts to promote access to health care and education, have increased. But Bank contracts are worth millions, and multinational corporations have remained major beneficiaries. In 1995, Lawrence Summers, then an under-secretary at the Treasury Department—he is now its Secretary—told Congress that for each dollar the American government contributed to the World Bank, American corporations received $1.35 in procurement contracts. One of the Bank's major proposals at the moment is for the development of oilfields in Chad, in central Africa, and the construction of an oil pipeline running more than six hundred miles to the coast at Cameroon. The environmental impact of this pipeline is predicted by many to be dire, the benefits to the people in the area minimal. The big winners will, in all likelihood, be the Bank's major partners in the project—Exxon Mobil and Chevron.



More onerous than ill-advised projects, however, for the people of the global South has been the crushing accumulation of debt by their governments. This debt now totals more than two trillion dollars, and servicing it—simply paying the interest—has become the single largest budget item for scores of poor countries. About twenty years ago, the World Bank and the I.M.F. began attaching stricter conditions to the loans they made to debtor countries to help them avoid outright default. More than ninety countries have now been subjected to I.M.F.-imposed austerity schemes, also known as structural-adjustment programs. Typically, these force a nation to cut spending in health, education, and welfare programs; reduce or eliminate food, energy, and transport subsidies; devalue its local currency; raise interest rates to attract foreign capital; privatize state property; and lower barriers to foreign ownership of local industries, land, and assets.

This is where the World Trade Organization comes in—or, rather, where its agenda dovetails with the work of the Bank and the I.M.F. All three institutions have always sought to increase world trade. (The W.T.O. is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which began in 1947 and was folded into the W.T.O. in 1995.) But the W.T.O. is the spearhead of the present surge toward economic globalization. It is a huge bureaucracy that makes binding rules intended to remove obstacles to the expansion of commercial activity among the hundred and thirty-five countries that constitute its membership. This means, in practice, an incremental transfer of power from local and national governments (the bodies likely to erect such obstacles) to the W.T.O., which acts as a trade court, hearing, behind closed doors, disputes among members accusing one another of creating barriers to trade. These "barriers" may be health, safety, or environmental laws, and a W.T.O. ruling takes precedence over all other international agreements. A country found to be impeding trade must change the offending law or suffer harsh sanctions. The effect is to deregulate international commerce, freeing the largest corporations—which, measured as economic entities, already dwarf most of the world's countries—to enter any market, extract any resource, without constraint by citizenries. Speaking anonymously, a former W.T.O. official recently told the *Financial Times*, "This is the place where governments collude in private against their domestic pressure groups."

There is, in other words, little mystery about why the W.T.O. and its partners in free-trade promotion, the World Bank and the I.M.F., have become the protest targets of choice for environmentalists, labor unions, economic nationalists, small farmers and small-business people, and their allies. Trade rules among countries are obviously needed. The question is whom those rules will benefit, whose rights they will protect.

The fifty thousand people who took to the streets of Seattle chanting "No new round—turn around!" had clearly decided that the W.T.O. was not on their side when it came to steering the direction of global trade. But even that might be too broad a statement—for the coalition that gathered there was wildly diverse, its collective critique nothing if not eclectic. Many of its members would probably not agree, for instance, that trade rules are "obviously" needed. That's my view, but the movement against corporate-led globalization contains many people who accept fewer rules of the capitalist game than I do.

The Direct Action Network (DAN) probably belongs in the deeply anti-capitalist category. But the group is less than a year old and extremely loosely structured, so its ideology isn't easy to get a fix on. What does seem certain is that the shutdown (or "meltdown," as Burson-Marsteller has it) of the Seattle Ministerial would never have happened without the emergence and furious efforts of the Direct Action Network.

Juliette Beck was present at DAN's creation. Late last spring, a young organizer named David Solnit, who was well known in the movement for his dedication and ingenuity, and for his giant homemade puppets—Solnit's allegorical figures have appeared in demonstrations from coast to coast—approached Beck with a plan to shut down the Seattle meeting. Dozens of groups, including the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and Global Trade Watch, a leading branch of Nader's Public Citizen, were already planning for Seattle. But no one was talking shutdown. Solnit thought it could be done, and he figured that Global Exchange could help. Beck and Kevin Danaher called in the Rainforest Action Network and a Berkeley-based group called the Ruckus Society, which specializes in nonviolent guerrilla action, and DAN was hatched.

Solnit was the dynamo but not the leader. "DAN is lots of lieutenants, no generals," Danaher says. The word went out, largely over the Internet, about DAN's plans, and dozens of groups and countless individuals expressed interest. The DAN coalition developed along what is known as the "affinity-group model." Affinity groups are small, semi-independent units, pledged to coalition goals, tactics, and principles—including, in DAN's case, nonviolent action—but free to make their own plans. Members look out for one another during protests, and some have designated roles: medic, legal support (avoids arrest), "spoke" (confers with other affinity groups through affinity "clusters"), "action elf" (looks after food, water, and people's spirits). Thousands signed up for training, and for "camps" organized by the Ruckus Society, where they could learn not only the techniques of classic civil disobedience but specialized skills like urban rappelling (for hanging banners on buildings), forming human blockades, and how to "lock down" in groups (arms linked through specially constructed plastic tubes). Solnit coördinated a road show that toured the West in the months before the W.T.O. Ministerial, presenting music and speakers and street theatre, urging people to get involved and come to Seattle.

They came, of course, and the combination of strict civil-disobedience discipline (the only way that the lines around the hotels and meeting places and across key intersections could have held, preventing W.T.O. delegates from gathering) and polymorphous protest (dancers on vans, hundreds of children dressed as sea turtles and monarch butterflies, Korean priests in white robes playing flutes and drums to protest genetically modified food) could never have been centrally planned.

The affinity-group model proved extremely effective in dealing with police actions. Downtown Seattle had been divided by a DAN "spokescouncil" into thirteen sectors, with an affinity cluster responsible for each sector. There were also flying squads—mobile affinity groups that could quickly take the place of groups that

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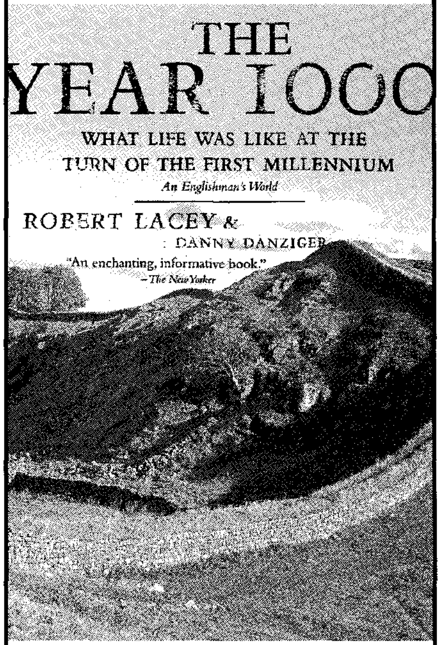
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had been arrested or beaten or gassed from the positions they were trying to hold. The structure was flexible, and tactically powerful, and the police, trying to clear the streets, resorted to increasingly brutal methods, firing concussion grenades, mashing pepper spray into the eyes of protesters, shooting rubber bullets into bodies at short range. By the afternoon of November 30th (the first day of the meeting), the police had run low on ammunition, and that evening the mayor of Seattle called out the National Guard.

There were hundreds of arrests. Beck, who was teargassed on a line blocking the entrance to the convention center, had credentials, through Global Exchange, to enter the theatre where the W.T.O. was supposed to be having its opening session. She went inside, found a few delegates milling, and an open microphone. She and Danaher and Medea Benjamin—another co-founder of Global Exchange—took the stage, uninvited, and suggested that delegates join them in a discussion. The interlopers were hustled off the stage. Beck elected not to go quietly. Marshals put her in a pain hold—her arm twisted behind her back—and dragged her through the theatre. A news camera recorded the event. "Then CNN kept showing it, over and over, them carrying me off, whenever they talked about the arrests," she says. "My claim to fame. Except I wasn't arrested! They just threw me out."

Ironically, the only protesters not following the nonviolence guidelines—a hundred or so "black bloc" anarchists, who started smashing shopwindows—were hardly bothered by the police. The black-bloc crews, whose graffiti and occasional "communiqués" run to nihilist slogans ("Civilization Is Collapsing—Let's Give It a Push!"), were masked, well organized, young and fleet of foot, and armed with crowbars and acid-filled eggs. The police in their heavy riot gear could not have caught them if they'd tried. The targeted shops belonged to big corporations: Nike, the Gap, Fidelity Investments, Starbucks, Levi's, Planet Hollywood. Still, other protesters chanted "Shame! Shame!" Some even tried to stop the attacks. There were scuffles, and suggestions that the black blocs contained police agents provocateurs—hence the masks. Medea Benjamin, who had helped produce the original exposé of Nike's sweatshops in Asia, found herself in the absurd position of siding with protesters who were defending a Niketown. And her fear (shared by many) that a few broken windows might snatch away the headlines in the national press proved justified.

The political spectrum represented in the protests was improbably wide, ranging from, on the right, James Hoffa's Teamsters and the A.F.L.-C.I.O. (who fielded tens of thousands of members for a march) to, on the left, a dozen or more anarchist factions (the black blocs were a rowdy minority within a generally less aggressive minority), including the ancient Industrial Workers of the World. All these groups had found, if not a common cause, at least a common foe. Some unlikely alliances were cemented. The United Steelworkers union and Earth First!, for example, had a common enemy in the Maxxam Corporation, which logs old-growth forests *and* owns steel mills, and the two groups are currently working together to end a bitter lockout at a Kaiser Aluminum plant in Tacoma.

Inside the besieged W.T.O. Ministerial, there was a rebellion among countries from the global South, which raised the possibility of another, truly formidable alliance with some of the forces out in the streets. The leaders of the poorer countries, though often depicted as pawns of the major powers, content to offer their countries' workers to the world market at the lowest possible wages—and to pollute their air and water and strip-mine their natural resources, in exchange for their own commissions on the innumerable deals that come with corporate globalization—in reality have to answer, in many cases, to complex constituencies at home, many of whom are alarmed about their own economic recolonization. In Seattle, delegations from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America—rattled by the total disruption of the Ministerial's schedule, and furious about being excluded from key meetings held privately by the rich countries—issued statements announcing their refusal to sign "agreements" produced at such meetings. In the end, no agreements were signed, no new round launched, and the Ministerial finished in disarray. This insurgency was often depicted in the American press as a refusal by the representatives of the poor countries to accept higher labor and environmental standards being imposed on them by the West, but that was not the gist of the revolt, which ran deeper and echoed the fundamental questions being asked outside in the streets about the mandate of the W.T.O.

"Coalition-building is hard," Juliette Beck said. "There's no doubt about it. But it's what we do." We were sitting in a deserted café in some sort of Latino community center one Sunday night in Berkeley, sipping beers. "At Global Exchange, we try to think of campaigns that will appeal to the average Joe on the street. We're really not interested in just organizing other leftists. Big corporations are a great target, because they do things that hurt virtually everybody. My dad, who's very right-wing, but libertarian, hates corporations. The H.M.O.s have practically ruined his medical practice, mainly because he insists on spending as much time with his patients as he thinks they need. After Seattle, he read a column by the economist Robert Kuttner, and suddenly, he said, he got what we're trying to do. Kuttner apparently explained that corporations just naturally grab all the power they can, and when they've grabbed too much there has to be a backlash. That's what led, a hundred years ago, to trust-busting and federal regulation after the robber barons did their thing, and that's what's causing this movement now. It was nice to hear my dad say that."

Across the street was a café/bookshop/community center, this one run by an anarchist collective (we were, remember, in Berkeley) called Long Haul Infoshop, which distributes a radical journal called *Slingshot*. In a special W.T.O. edition, *Slingshot* had derided Global Exchange and "other despicable examples of the corporate left"; another column slammed Medea Benjamin for her defense of Nike. I asked Beck about the attacks from the left. She sighed. "Yeah, there's been a lot of fallout. A lot of people believe property destruction isn't violence. But that wasn't really the issue in Seattle. The issue was what message, what images, we were sending out to the world. There's always going to be disagreement. When it comes to these institutions—the W.T.O., the I.M.F., the World Bank—we have reformists and abolitionists. If we're talking about the World

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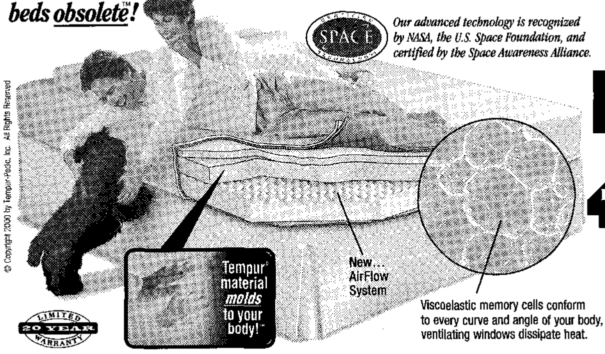

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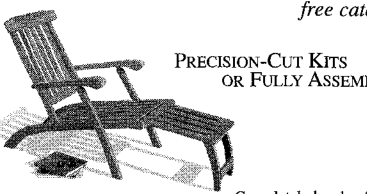

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Bank, I, for instance, am an abolitionist."

I asked Beck if she considered herself an anarchist.

She shrugged, as if the question were obtuse.

DAN seemed, at a glance, to be an anarchist organization, or at least organized on anarchist principles, I said.

"Sure," Beck said, still looking nonplussed. Finally, she said, "Well, I definitely respect anarchist ways of organizing. I guess I'm still learning what it means to be an anarchist. But the real question is: Can this anarchist model that's working so well now for organizing protests be applied on an international scale to create the democratic decision-making structures that we need to eliminate poverty?"

I took this opportunity to float a theory, somewhat grander and iffier than Kuttner's, about the historical forces that cause anarchism to flourish. Anarchism, I said, first arose in Europe as a response to the disruptions of peasant and artisanal life caused by industrialization and the rapid concentration of power among new business élites. After a good long fight, anarchism basically lost out to socialism as an organizing vision among workers—and lost again, after a heady late run, in Republican Spain, to Communism (which then lost to fascism). But anarchism was obviously enjoying some kind of small-time comeback, and, if today's Information Revolution was even half as significant as both its critics and its cheerleaders like to claim—the most important economic development since the Industrial Revolution, and so on—then perhaps the time was ripening, socialism having been disgraced as an alternative to capitalism, for another great wave of anarchist protest against this latest, alarmingly swift amassing of power in the hands of a few hundred billionaires. Did Beck know that the term "direct action" was used by anarcho-syndicalists in France at the turn of the last century?

She did. She also knew, it seemed, that anarchism has become wildly popular among Latin American students who are fed up with what they call *neoliberalismo* (their term for corporate-led globalization) but disenchanted, also, with the traditional left. And she knew that the students who went on strike and took over the National University in Mexico City for nine months recently were mostly anarchists. But did I know (I didn't) that it had been a structural-adjustment edict from the World Bank that led the Mexican government to raise student fees, which sparked the strike and the takeover?

Beck drained her beer. DAN, whatever its historical analogues, had been thriving since its triumph in Seattle, she said. The network was now directing most of its considerable energies toward the April action in Washington, D.C., which people were calling "A16," for April 16th, the day the I.M.F. planned to meet. She was going to Washington herself in a couple of days, and then joining a road show, which would start making its way up the East Coast, beating the drums for the big event.

"I Am Funkier Than You," the bumper sticker said, and it was almost certainly true. But the Mango Affinity Group, as the road-show crew had taken to calling themselves, had scored this big, extremely grubby van free from a woman in Virginia simply by asking for a vehicle on the A16 E-mail list serve, so they were not complaining. Liz Guy, an efficient DAN stalwart usually known as Sprout, had pulled together both the crew—eight or nine activists, aged nineteen to thirty-two, including Juliette Beck—and a tight, three-week, show-a-day itinerary that ran from Florida to Montreal before looping back to Washington. I found them in St. Petersburg, bivouacked under a shade tree on the campus of Eckerd College, working on a song.

Beck introduced me. They were a sweet-voiced, ragamuffin group, drawn from Connecticut, Atlanta, Seattle (Sprout), and the mountains of British Columbia. This afternoon was going to be their first performance together, and, judging from the situation as showtime approached and they began lugging their gear into a low-roofed, brutally air-conditioned hall, somebody had blown the publicity. There was virtually no one around except their hosts—two young DAN guys, Peter and Josh, who were hopefully laying out anarchist and vegan pamphlets and books on a table. Peter and Josh, embarrassed, said they had just returned from a Ruckus Society camp. Evidently, they had left arrangements in the wrong hands. "Let's do a skate-by, see where people are," one of them said, and both jumped on skateboards and shot off.

"Woodstock times ten," Kevin Danaher had said. Pure hooey, I now thought.

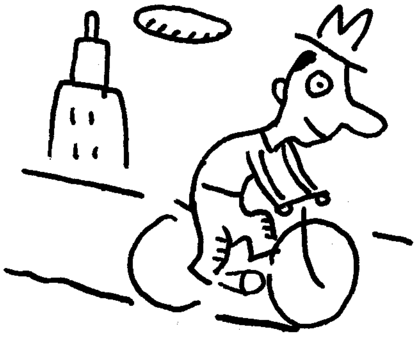
In truth, A16 did not have going for it many of the things that had converged so resoundingly in Seattle. The planning for the protest was far more rushed. The W.T.O.'s Seattle Ministerial had been, moreover, a momentous gathering, meant to kick off a so-called Millennial Round, whereas the World Bank/I.M.F. spring meetings were strictly routine, and scheduled to be brief. Big labor, finally, had no special interest in the World Bank and the I.M.F., and the A.F.L.-C.I.O., while endorsing the A16 protest, had decided to concentrate its energies this political season on preventing the permanent normalization of United States trade relations with China. A demonstration by union members to press these issues was scheduled to take place in Washington on April 12th. And it wasn't the only event threatening to disperse attention from A16. There was a big protest planned for April 9th, also in Washington, organized by a movement called Jubilee 2000, to demand debt cancellation for the poorest countries.

The hope, of course, was that all these protests would produce some sort of anti-globalization synergy that might just culminate, on A16, in the type of massive turnout that would certainly be needed to have any chance of shutting down the World Bank and the I.M.F. meetings. On the Internet, as always, anything looked possible. Caravans were being organized all over the country, reconnaissance was being conducted on "targets" in Washington, anti-capitalist revolutionary blocs were breaking away from the DAN-centered action with furious objections to mealymouthed talk of "fair trade" and alleged "collaboration with the enemy at large"—to, that is, meetings being held by organizers with the D.C. police to try to prevent bloodshed. (In fact, the D.C. police had gone to Seattle to observe the demonstrations, and had spent a million dollars on new riot gear for A16.) Beck had told me, back in San Francisco, "I get so tired of the Internet and E-mail. We couldn't do this work without it, but, really, it's not organizing. There's nothing like face to face."

Now in Florida, Beck, perhaps getting desperate for some F2F, approached two young women who had wandered into the frigid hall, possibly just to get out of the afternoon heat, and started regaling them with a spiel about how the World Bank and the I.M.F. are "partners in crime." The young women, who wore tank tops and looked as if they belonged on a beach somewhere, nodded politely but said nothing. In the background, Damon, a tall, dark-skinned, curly-haired musician from British Columbia, strummed a guitar, and the rest of the Mango Affinity Group busied themselves making posters denouncing exploitation.

Blessedly, between the skate-by and Damon's guitar, people began to trickle into the hall. Soon there was an audience of thirty or so, and the show began. Damon disappeared inside a towering, black-suited puppet with a huge papier-mâché head, sloping skull, and cigar stuck between his lips, Beck slapped a "World Bank/I.M.F." sign on his chest, and he began to roar, "You are all under my power!" The crowd laughed, and he roared, "It's not funny, it's true!" They laughed harder. A political skit followed, with a series of fresh-faced young women getting thrashed by an I.M.F. henchman for demanding health and safety standards, then put to work in a Gap sweatshop. "Right to Organize" also got pounded. Afterward, Beck led a teach-in called Globalization 101, with pop quizzes on the meaning of various trade and finance acronyms, and Hershey's Kisses tossed to those who got the answers right. One middle-aged trio—Eckerd faculty, from the look of them—seemed well versed on the topic. Then the Mango members introduced themselves individually—Leigh, from an "intentional community" in Atlanta, Ricardo, from a Canadian "solar-powered coöperative" where people grew much of their own food. Sprout took the opportunity to encourage people to form affinity groups, explaining what they were and how they worked.

I was struck by Sprout's poise. Talking to dozens of strangers, she somehow made her presentation seem like an intimate conversation, with pauses, eye contact, murmurs back and forth, little encouraging interjections ("Awesome!" "Cool!") when she felt she'd been understood. Twenty-five, physically small, and dressed with utter simplicity—loose shirt, cargo pants, no shoes—she achieved, with no theatricality, an effect of tremendous presence. It occurred to me that Sprout, with her neighborly voice and unerring choice of words, could easily be very successful in a completely different arena. On another sort of road show, for instance—the sort that dot-com startups mount, touring and performing for investors and analysts, before taking their companies public. The same was true for Beck. And both women came from cities (Seattle, San Francisco) that were crawling with rich dot-commers more or less their age. What was it that made them choose this raggedy, low-status, activist's path instead? While the rest of the country obsessed over its stock portfolio, these brainy young people were working killer hours for little, if any, pay—quixotically trying, as they sometimes put it, to globalize the world from below.



Next on the program was a rousing folk song, with Damon on guitar and Sage, his regular bandmate from B.C., on drums. Their vocal harmonies sounded fairly polished. Then Sprout produced a viola, slipping without fanfare into the tune, and began improvising fiddle breaks of steadily increasing warmth and precision. I caught Beck's eye. Who *was* this woman? Beck could not stop grinning. The Mango group then ruined the soaring mood, as far as I was concerned, by leading the crowd in some mortifyingly corny chants—"Ain't no power like the power of the people, cuz the power of the people don't stop!"

Beck asked for a show of hands. How many people thought they might go to Washington for A16? Fifteen or twenty hands shot up, including those of the two women in tank tops. I was amazed that they had even stayed for the show. A signup sheet was circulated.

Next came nonviolence training, for which ten or twelve people stuck around. Leigh and Sprout led the training, which lasted into the evening and included a lot of "role-playing"—people pretending to be protesters, police, I.M.F. officials, workers trying to get to work. There were drills in quick decision-making among affinity groups: shall we stay locked down or move when threatened with arrest and felony charges? Group dynamics were dissected after each scene. Sprout demonstrated unthreatening body language. Hand signals for swift, clear communication were suggested. Peter and Josh, the two local DAN guys, joined in the training, and it was soon obvious that they had a lot of experience. Peter, who was wiry, bushy-bearded, and soft-spoken, firmly refused to be bullied by some of the bigger, more aggressive men in the group. It became clear that effective nonviolent protest needed a cool head, and that bluster wasn't helpful. Toward the end of the evening, Leigh presented a list of things to bring to an action. Most were common-sense items like food, water, and herbal remedies for tear gas. The rationale for others was less self-evident. Maxi pads?

Leigh and Sprout glanced at one another. "If the cops start using chemical warfare, some women start bleeding very heavily," Leigh said. There was a brief, shocked silence. "They're good as bandages, too," she added.

What about gas masks?

"They can become targets," Josh said. "In Seattle, the cops tried to tear them off, and if they couldn't reach them they fired rubber bullets, or wooden bullets, or these wooden dowel rods they had, at the masks. Some people got a lot of glass in their faces. Masks can be dangerous."

The trainees stared.

"One thing that's good to have is big toenail clippers," Peter said cheerfully. "Put 'em in your pocket, and if you're arrested, and just left in a cell or a paddy wagon, somebody can fish them out of your pocket and cut off your cuffs with 'em. They use cheap plastic cuffs when they arrest a lot of people, and if they leave you sitting for ten or fifteen hours it's a lot more comfortable if your hands aren't tied behind you."

Ten or fifteen hours?

"It happens. It happened to me in Seattle."

It had happened to Sprout, too—seventeen hours in an unheated cell alone, doing jumping jacks to try to stay warm.

The tone of the gathering was entirely sober now. Somebody asked about carrying I.D. during an action.

"It depends whether you want to practice jail solidarity," Beck said. "That's something you need to decide with your affinity group."

None of the trainees knew what jail solidarity was.

"Noncoöperation with the system," they were told. It might be widely used in Washington—to clog the jails and courts and try to force mass dismissals of charges.

But the details of jail solidarity could wait for another session, Beck said. It was late. People were tired. DAN would be offering more nonviolence training locally in the weeks ahead, and everybody going to Washington for A16 should get as much training as possible.

We stayed that night with Peter and Josh. They lived in a mobile home near a strip mall in Clearwater. People slept on couches and chairs and on the floor, in the van, on a back porch, and on a tiny plywood dock on a fetid canal behind the trailer. I tried to sleep on the dock, but mosquitoes kept me awake. There was a full moon, and low, cotton-puff clouds streaming across it at an unusual speed. The clouds were glowing a sort of radioactive mauve from all the strip-mall lights.

At some point, the mosquitoes woke Beck, who was also on the dock. Out of the darkness, a restless voice: "We need a name. For the movement as a whole. Anti-Corporate Globalization isn't good enough. What do you think of Global Citizen Movement?"

I thought it needed work.

Beck started talking about plans she had for disrupting the Democratic Party's national Convention this summer, in Los Angeles. She mentioned a Millennium Youth March.

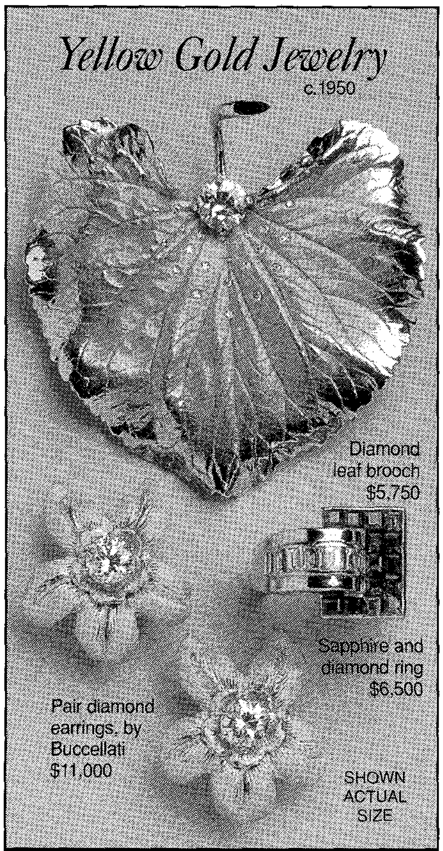
"You're thinking big."

"That's my job."

I wanted to know what would happen in Washington on A16.

"Me, too," she said, and I thought I heard her sigh. "For now, crowd-building is the main thing. That's why I'm really glad I'm on this road show. I kind of feel like I should be in D.C., walking the site, doing messaging, doing logistics, but I'm going to stay with this as long as I can."

"Messaging" meant press releases, banners, slogans—even sound bites for protesters to give to reporters, should the opportunity arise. I had begun to think that for the American public effective messaging about the I.M.F. and the World Bank was a hopeless task. In Nigeria and Venezuela, yes, everybody knew and had



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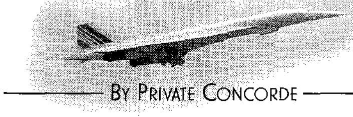

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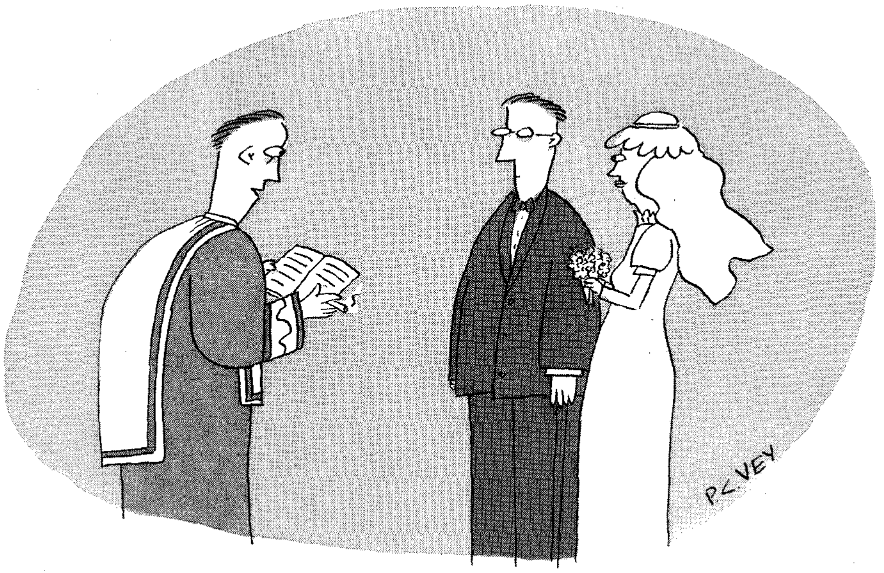

"And do you, Robert, mind if I smoke?"

• •

strong opinions about structural adjustment and I.M.F. debt. That was never going to be true in this country. People might turn out in large numbers, for many different reasons, on A16, but it would basically be Americans expressing solidarity with people in poor countries who are on the receiving end of bad policies. That wasn't a formula for real political leverage. The plight of, say, the Ittu Oromo would never move more than a few faraway hearts. In the great shakeout of economic globalization, most Americans probably believe, not unreasonably, that they will be among the revolution's winners. As for the big goal—democratizing international decision-making, in order to eliminate poverty—it seemed to me impossibly abstract.

I was loath to tell Beck that. While she seemed quite dauntless, her identification with her work seemed, at the same time, perilously deep. She once told me that she thought it was significant that she had been born in 1973, the same year that Richard Nixon allowed the dollar to float—"and the I.M.F. should have been allowed to die!" On another occasion, she'd said, "I really feel lucky to be doing this work. When I started studying the World Bank in college, I couldn't believe how evil it was, even while it's supposedly all about fighting poverty. I thought, you know, it would really be an honor to dedicate my life to fighting this evil institution. And that's all we're asking people to do: help us drag these institutions out into the sunlight of public scrutiny, where they belong. They'll shrivel up like Dracula!"

While I tried to doze, Beck reminded me that the World Bank and I.M.F. had pressured Haiti to freeze its minimum wage, that NAFTA was a failure from beginning to end—details available if I needed them—and that the United States Supreme Court was hearing a crucial case, which I should watch closely when I got back to New York. It seemed that the federal government was trying to stop the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from boycotting companies that did business in Burma, which uses forced labor.

At dawn, finally agreeing that sleep was hopeless, Beck and I took a canoe that was tied to the dock and paddled off down the stinking canal, gliding past the battered, moldy back doors of mobile homes. It was a Sunday morning. Everybody in the trailers seemed to be asleep—probably dreaming about their stock portfolios. The mangroves on the banks slowly closed over our heads. We tried to push through. There seemed to be wider, brighter water ahead. Beck was happy to keep going, but I was in the bow, catching spider webs with my face. In the end, we turned back.

The Mango Affinity Group held a morning meeting on the little dock. While trying to decide who would be responsible for grocery shopping, they started goofing on the hand signals developed by DAN for anarchist consensus decision-making, cracking each other up. Beck was supposed to be guiding the discussion—facilitating, they called it—but she had the giggles, too. Group morale seemed high.

Bushy-bearded Peter came out of the trailer, yawning and stretching. He started filling a plastic bag with grapefruit from a low, gnarled dwarf of a tree. The fruit looked awful, with upper halves all blackened as if by grime falling from the sky, but Peter assured me they were fine. I cut one open. It was the best grapefruit I had ever tasted.

Inside the trailer, there was a small room devoted to Josh and Peter's book and periodical distribution business. They had a dense, nondoctrinaire selection, with sections on Organizing, Anarchism/Social Theory, Animal Liberation, Punk, Direct Action, Media, Globalization, Feminism/Sexuality, and Youth Oppression/Radical Education. They had ten Noam Chomsky titles, lots of Emma Goldman, a guide to "understanding and attacking mainstream media," arguments against compulsory schooling, even a collection of Digger tracts (seventeenth-century free-love proto-anarchists). Josh and Peter's catalogue included an introduction that traced their own political development from 1996, when "we were straightedge as fuck," to more recent days, when "our distro grew greener and more anarchistic."

Elsewhere in the trailer, somebody had put on a Delta blues tape. Out in the living room, I found Josh sprawled on a couch. He was a quiet guy, in his early twenties, with sparse blond muttonchops and small blue eyes. He was wearing a baseball cap and talking to a glum-looking young woman with an elaborately pierced nose. I started asking Josh about himself. He wasn't a student, he said pleasantly. He had realized he could learn more outside school. He didn't have a job. "But I need to get one, just to make money. The problem is, I'm really too busy to work."

Through a window, I could see the Mango Affinity Group loading up the van. Beck and Sprout, the lanky, tireless trade wonk and the barefoot fiddler, had their heads bent together over a map. Today, the road show went to Gainesville. Tomorrow, Valdosta, Georgia. ♦

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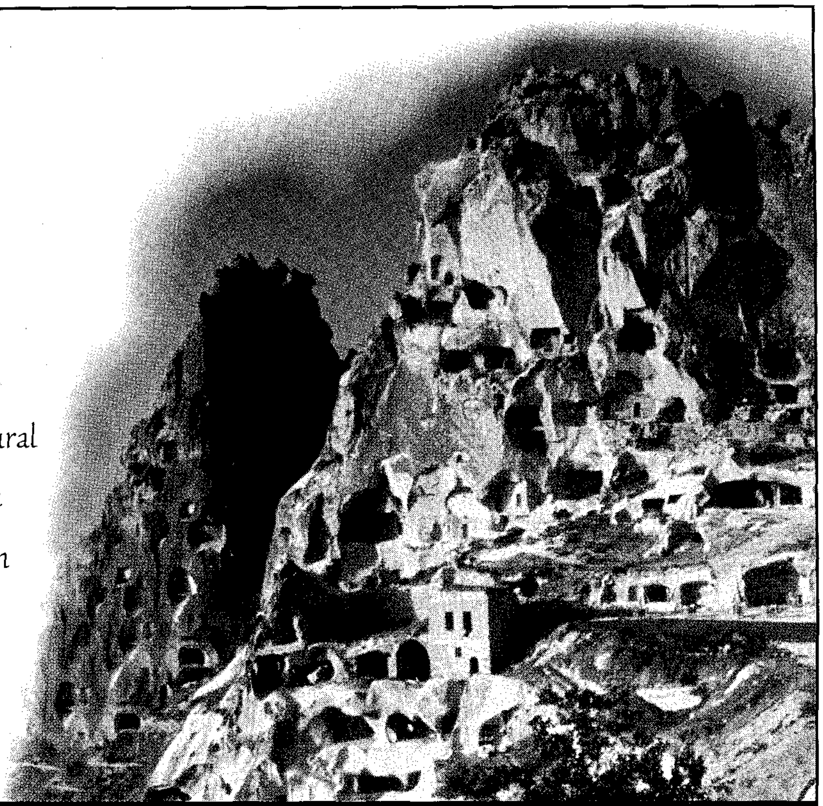

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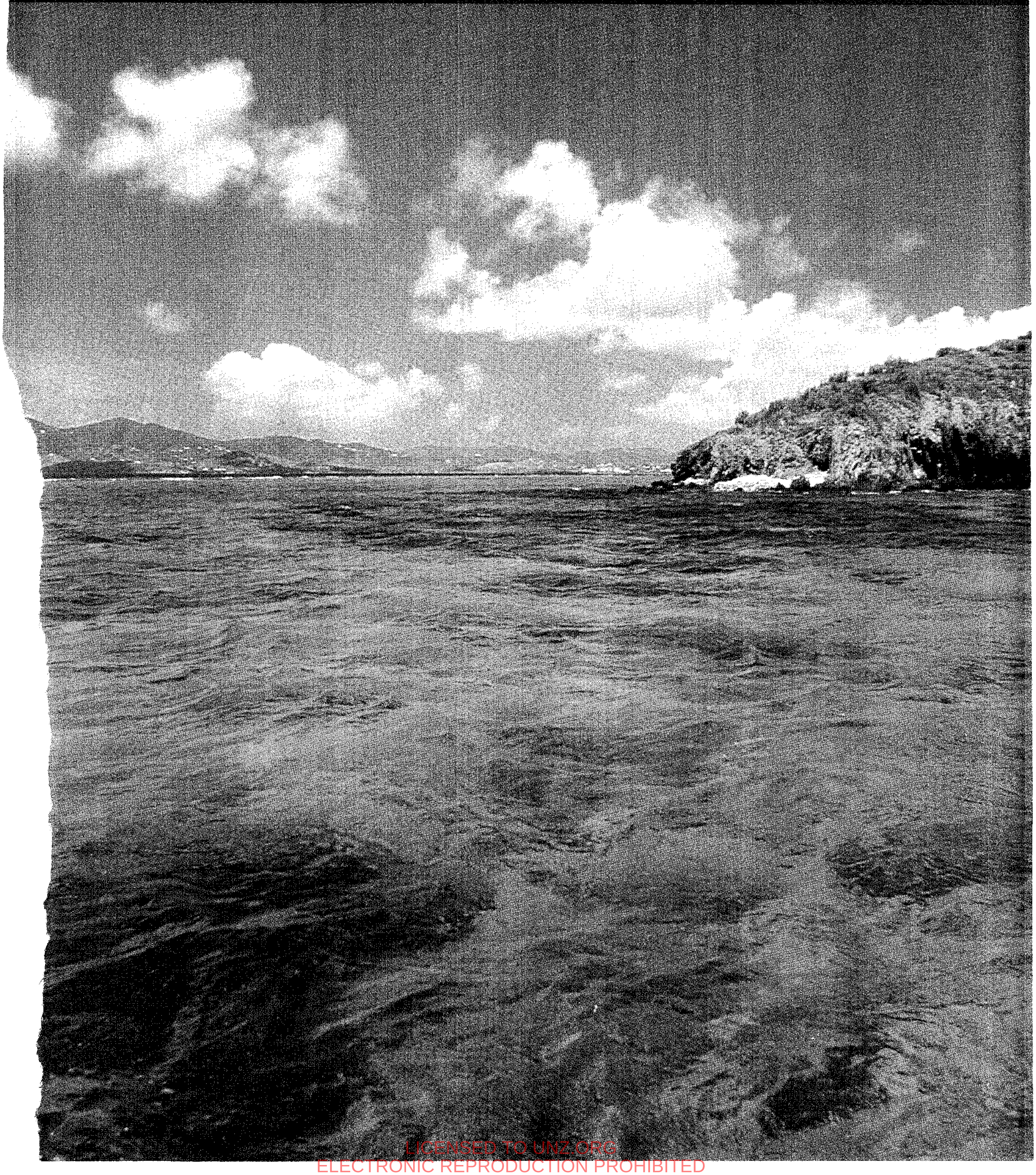

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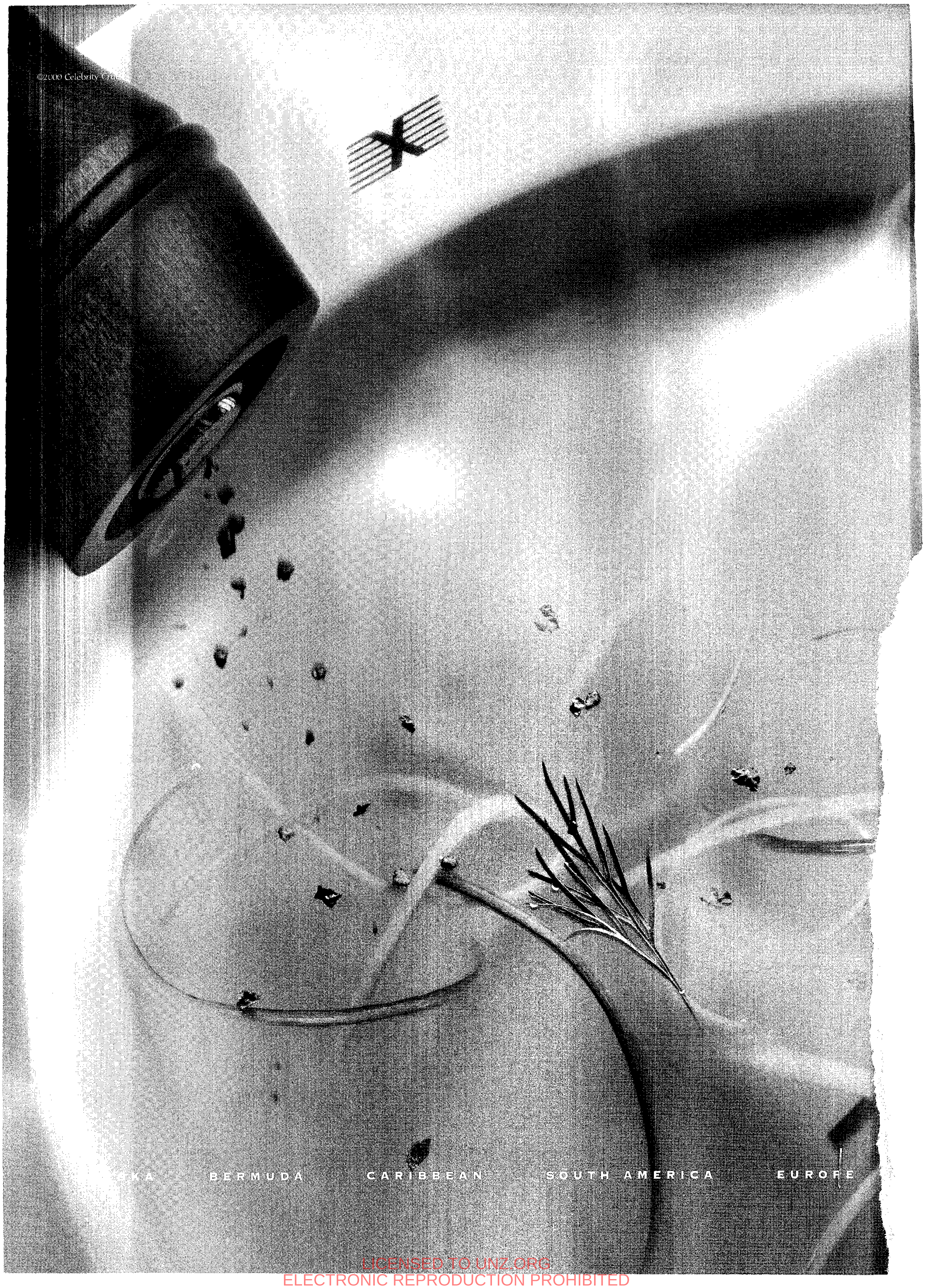
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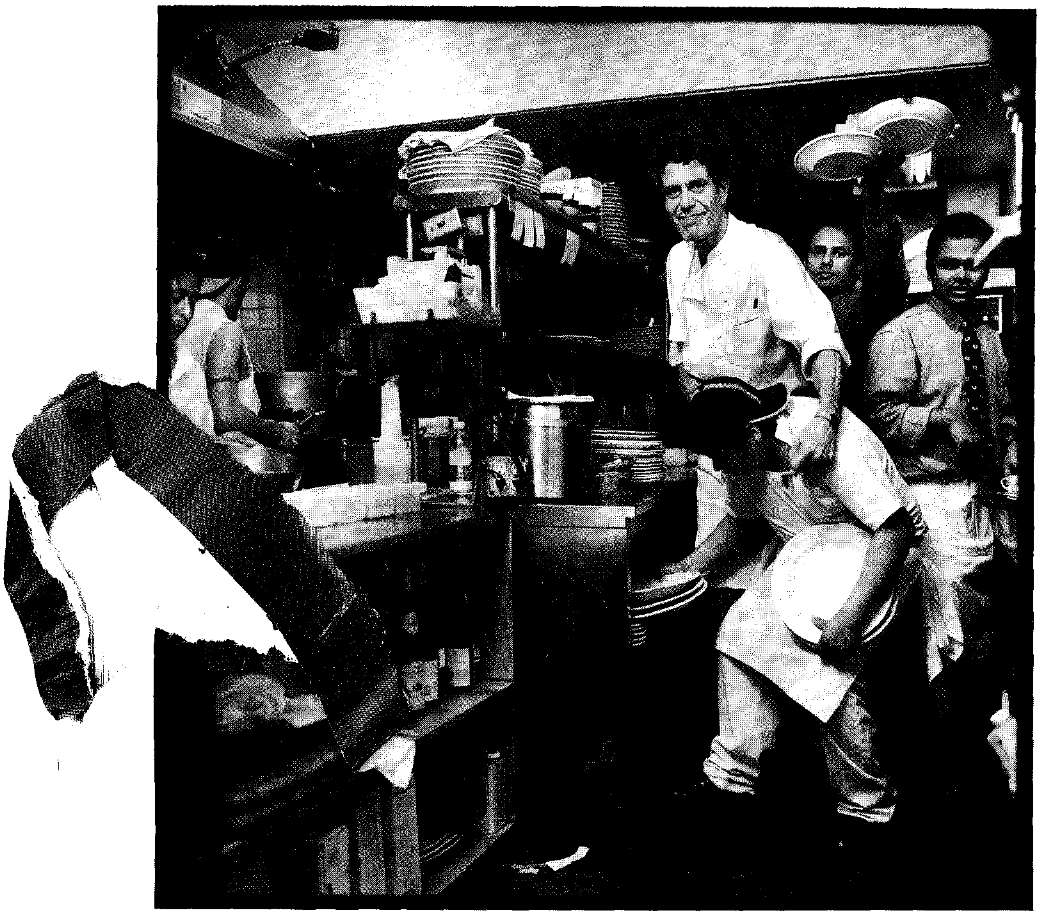
ANNALS OF GASTRONOMY

HELL'S KITCHEN

Getting through the day—and night—with a New York chef.

BY ANTHONY BOURDAIN



The author with some of his staff at Les Halles. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

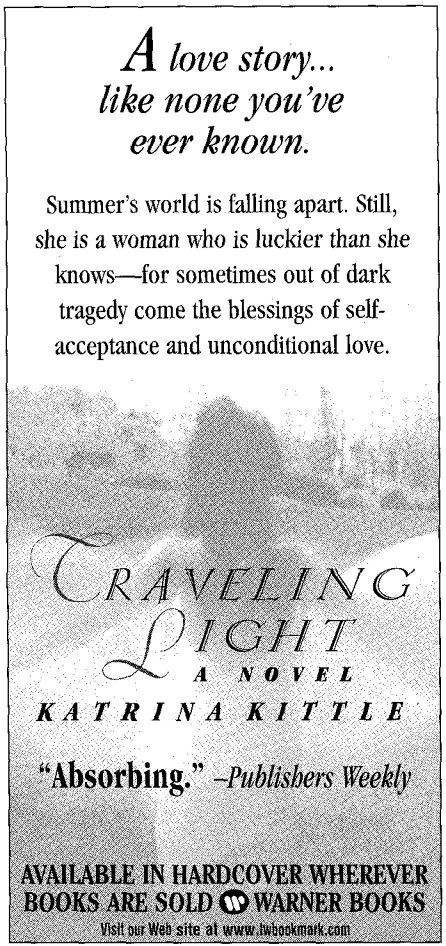
SABA

On Friday morning, I wake up at five-fifty-five. While I brush my teeth, and take my first aspirins of the day, I'm thinking about weekend specials. The grill station will be too busy for elaborate presentations, so I need things that are quick, simple, and easily plated. The people who will be coming tonight and tomorrow night to Les Halles, a restaurant on Park Avenue South where I work as the chef, aren't like the people who come during the week. For the weekenders, a saddle of wild hare stuffed with foie gras is not a good special. Nor is any kind of fish with an exotic name.

Climbing into a taxi on Broadway, I decide that the fish special will be grilled tuna livornaise with roasted potatoes and grilled asparagus. It's a layup. My overworked grill man can heat the already cooked spuds and the blanched asparagus on a sizzle platter; the tuna will get a quick walk across the grill; and all he'll have to do is heat up the sauce at the last minute. For the appetizer special, I'm thinking cockles steamed with chorizo, leeks, tomatoes, and white wine—a one-pan wonder. The meat special is more problematic. The tuna will be taking up most of the grill's time, so the meat will have to be prepared at the sauté station. Not easy. Les Halles features classic French bistro food, and at any one time the sauté station has to be ready to turn out *moules à la marinière*, *boudin noir* with caramelized apples, filet au poivre, steak au poivre, steak tartare, calf's liver *persillé*, cassoulet Toulousain, *magret de moulard* with quince and *sauce miel*, the ridiculously popular mignon of pork, *pieds de cochon*, and a *navarin* of lamb that comes with baby carrots, pearl onions, niçoise olives, garlic confit, tomato *concassée*, fava beans, and chopped fresh herbs. But I've got a leg of venison and twelve pheasants coming in. I decide on the pheasant. I can par-roast it ahead of time, so that all my sous-chef will have to do is take it off the bone and sling it into the oven to finish, then heat up the sauce and the garnishes before serving.

As usual when I arrive, Jaimé, the night porter, has his boom box blasting salsa from behind the bar. I check the reservation book—eighty for tonight. I flip through the manager's log—the notebook in which the night guy tells the day guy about customer complaints, repair requirements, employee misbehavior, and important phone calls. I learn that last night my grill man called one of the waiters a cocksucker and pounded his fist on his cutting board in a "menacing way" when five diners came into the restaurant at three minutes before the midnight closing hour and ordered five *côtes de bœuf*, medium-well (cooking time: forty-five minutes). Jaimé grins at me from the stairs. He's covered with grime as a result of hauling hundreds of pounds of garbage out onto the street.

I go down into the cellar to my office, and change into chef's jacket, apron, and kitchen clogs, which are the preferred footwear for chefs because they "breathe" well and give good back support. I find my knife kit, stuff a thick stack of hand towels into it, and clip a pen into my jacket—sidewise, so it doesn't fall out when I bend over. Taking a ring of keys from my desk, I open the locks on the drygoods-storage room, the walk-in refrigerator, the reach-in coolers, the pastry box, and the freezers. I push back the plastic curtains to the refrigerated *boucherie*—a cool room where the butchers do their cutting—and take the assistant butcher's boom box from the worktable. Then I go back up to the kitchen. While I take cheese, garnishes, mussels, and sauces out of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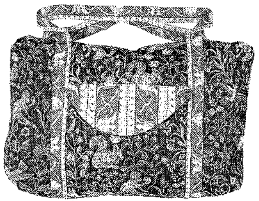

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the reach-in at my sauté station, I'm listening to the Dead Boys playing "Sonic Reducer."

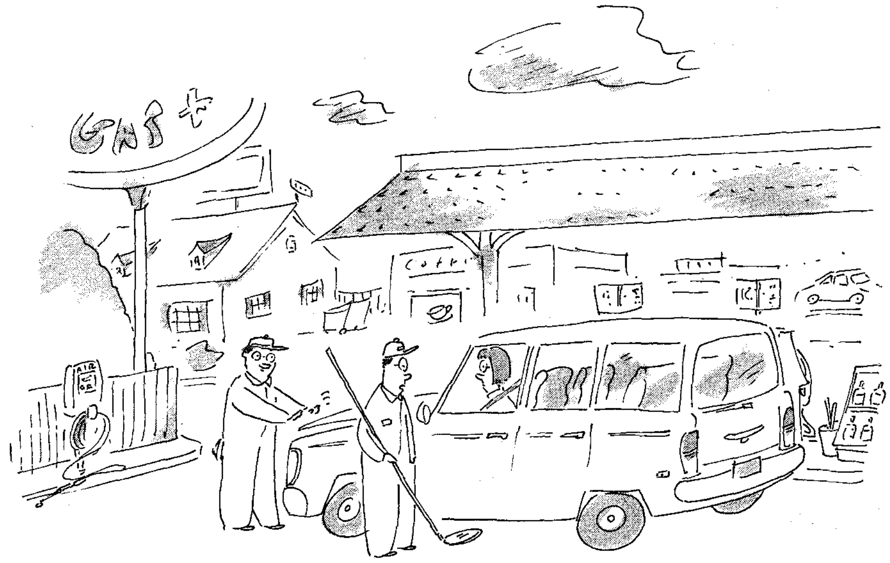
Carlos, my daytime grill man, comes in. He has a pierced eyebrow and a body by Michelangelo, and he considers himself a master soupmaker. He asks if I've got any red-snapper bones on the way. Yes. Carlos loves any soup he can jack with Ricard or Pernod, and today's *soupe de poisson* with rouille is one of his favorites. Omar, who works the cold station for appetizers and salads, and has a thick barbed-wire tattoo on one upper arm, is the next to arrive, and he's followed by the rest of the day team: Segundo, the prep centurion; Ramòn, the dishwasher; Janine, the pastry chef; and Camélia, the general manager. (Some of their names have been changed.)

Before noon, I cut and pepper *pavées* and filets; skin and slice calf's liver; caramelize apples; blanch baby carrots; make garlic confit; produce a livornaise sauce for the tuna and start a currant sauce for the pheasant; and assemble the *navarin*. Then I write up the specials so that Camélia can enter them into the computer and set the prices. At eight-thirty, my butcher, Hubert, arrives, looking as if he's woken up under a bridge. He unloads the meat order—*côtes de bœuf*, entrecôtes, rump steaks, racks of lamb, lamb-stew meat, *merguez* sausages, saucisson de Toulouse, *rosette*, pork belly, *onglets*, scraps, meat for steak tartare, pork tenderloins larded with bacon and garlic, pâtés, rillettes, galantines, and chickens.

Every few minutes, I hear the bell ring, as more stuff arrives. Segundo, the prep man, is downstairs checking off the orders as they leave the delivery ramp. Segundo's a mean-looking guy. He's from Mexico, and the other Mexicans at the restaurant claim that he carries a gun and sniffs paint thinner, and that he's done time. But he's the greatest prep cook I've ever had; he uses a full-sized butcher's scimitar to chop parsley, filament-fine.

The last cook to show up is Miguel, our French-fry master. This is a full-time job at Les Halles, where we are justifiably famous for our *frites*. Miguel, who looks like the descendant of an Aztec king, spends his day peeling potatoes, cutting potatoes, blanching potatoes, and then dropping them into three-hundred-and-seventy-five-degree peanut oil, tossing them with salt, and stacking the sizzling-hot fries on plates with his bare hands. I've had to do this a few times, and it requires serious calluses.

I work on a six-burner Garland. There's another range next to it, which is taken up with a bain-marie for sauces, with onion soup, and with stocks—veal, chicken, lamb, and pork—that have been reducing at a slow simmer during the previous day and night. When we're



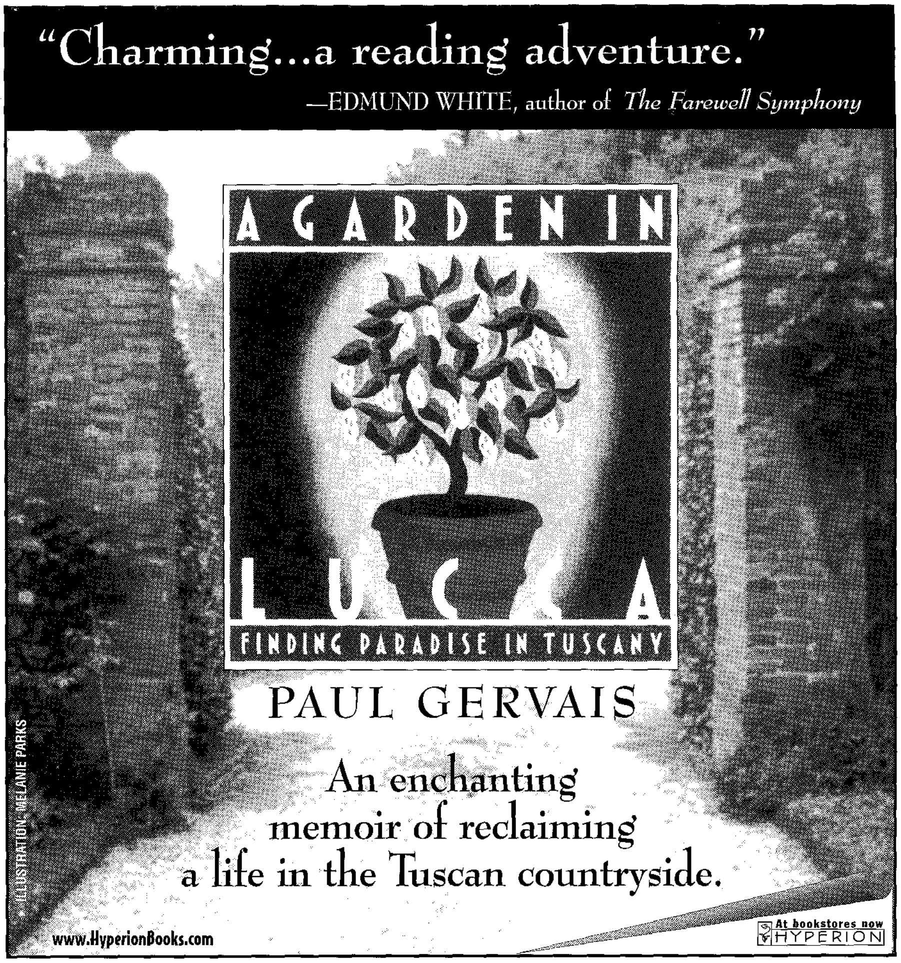
"Your fluids are fine, but you've got a slow leak in your left tire and a hidden explosive device in your right wheel well."

serving meals, one of my burners will be occupied by a pot of boiling water for Omar to dunk ravioli in. On another burner he'll sauté lardons for frisée salads, sear tidbits of hanger steak for *onglet* salad, or sauté diced potatoes in duck fat for the *confit de canard*. This leaves me with just four burners on which to prepare most of the orders.

While I'm reducing gastrite—sugar and vinegar—for the currant sauce, I make room next to me for Janine, the pastry chef, so she can melt chocolate over the simmering pasta water. Janine is an ex-waitress from Queens, and although she's right out of cooking school, she's tough. Already, she's had to endure the unwanted attentions of a leering French sous-chef and the usual chick-friendly Mexicans. I admire strong women in busy kitchens. They have a lot to put up with in our high-testosterone locker-room environment.

At eleven-thirty, I convene a meeting of the day waiters and run through the specials, speaking as slowly as I can, so that none of them describes my beautiful pheasant special as tasting "kind of like chicken." Today's lineup is not too bad: there's Morgan, the part-time underwear model; Rick, who's everyone's first choice for Waiter Most Likely to Shave His Head, Climb a Tower, and Start Shooting Strangers; and a new waiter, who doesn't know what prosciutto is, and who won't be around very long, I suspect. There are also two busboys—a taciturn workaholic from Portugal and a moody Bengali. My runner, whose job is to shout out the orders and shuttle food to the dining room, is the awesome Mohammed, who is capable of carrying five plates without a tray.

It's noon, and already customers are pouring in. Immediately, I get an order for pork mignon, two *boudins*, one calf's liver, and one pheasant, all for one table. The *boudins*—blood sausages—take the longest, so they have to go in the oven instantly. First, I prick their skins with a cocktail fork so that they don't explode; then I grab a fistful of caramelized apple sections and throw them into a sauté pan with some butter. I heat butter and oil for the pork in another sauté pan, throw a slab of liver into a pan of flour after salting and peppering it, and in another pan heat some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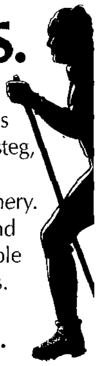
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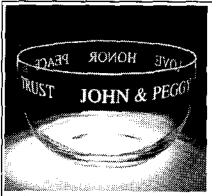

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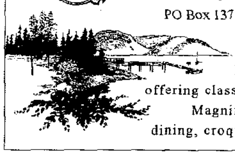
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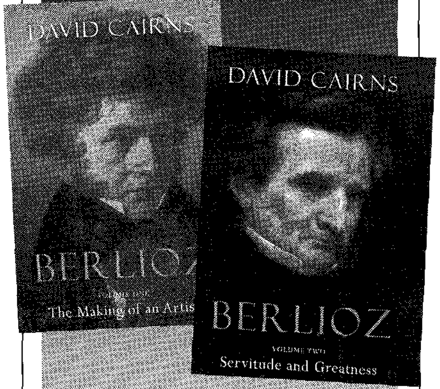

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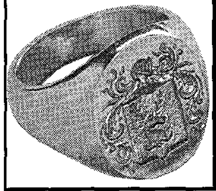

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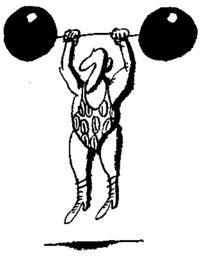
more butter and oil. I take half a pheasant off the bone and place it on a sizzle platter for the oven, then spin around to pour currant sauce into a small saucepan to reduce. Pans ready, I sear the pork, sauté the liver, and slide the pork straight into the oven on another sizzler. I deglaze the pork pan with wine and stock, add sauce and some garlic confit, then put the pan aside; I'll finish the reducing later. The liver, half-cooked, goes on another sizzler. I sauté some chopped shallots, deglaze the pan with red-wine vinegar, give it a shot of demiglace, season it, and put that aside, too. An order for mussels comes in, followed by one for breast of duck. I heat up a pan for the duck and load up a cold pan with mussels, tomato coulis, garlic, shallots, white wine, and seasoning. It's getting to be boogie time.

The key to staying on top of a busy station is to move on a dish as soon as Mohammed yells its name—set up the pan, do the pre-searing, get it into the oven quickly—so that later, when the whole order board is fluttering with dupes, I can tell which dishes I have working and which ones I have waiting, without having to read the actual tickets again.

"Ready on Table Twelve!" says Carlos, who's got a load of steaks and chops and a few tunas coming up. He wants to know if I'm close on my end. "Let's go on Twelve!" I say. Miguel starts dunking spuds. I call for mashed potatoes for the *boudins* from Omar; give the apples a few tosses over the flame; heat and swirl butter into the liver's shallot sauce; pull the pork mignons from the oven; heat potatoes and vegetables for the pheasant; squeeze the sauce for the pheasant between pots onto a back burner; move the mussels off the heat and into a bowl; then spin and bend to check on how my duck is doing.

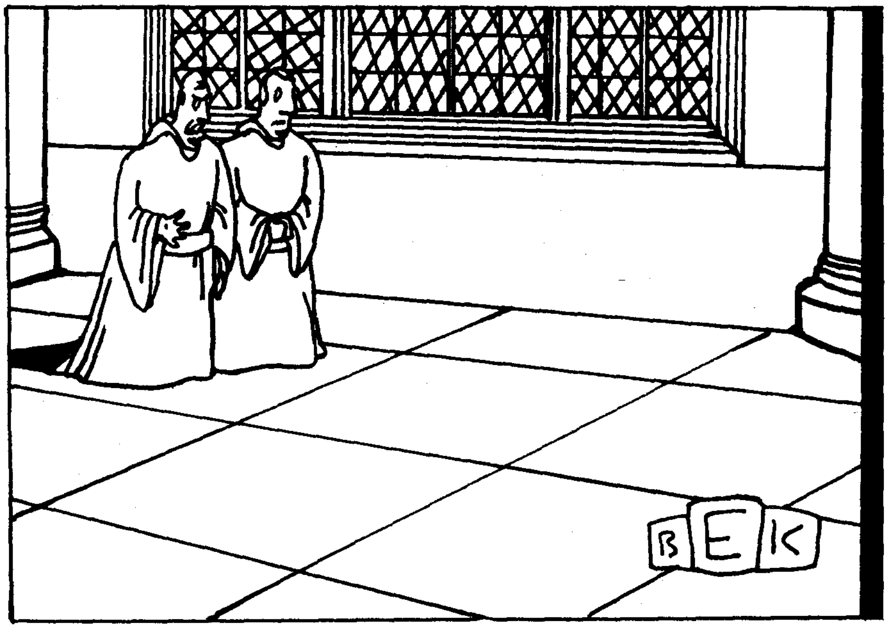


The intercom buzzes. "Line One for the chef," says the hostess, who's out front. It's a salesman, wanting to sell me some smoked fish. I start off all sweetness and light, and he goes into his pitch. He's halfway through it when I cut him off: "So what the fuck are you doing calling me in the middle of the lunch rush?" I hang up before I can hear his reply.

I catch the duck just in time, roll it over, skin side down, and pull it out of the oven. Mohammed yells out another pasta order. I pour extra-virgin into a pan and sauté some paper-thin garlic slices with crushed red pepper, add artichoke hearts, roasted vegetables, some olives. Whenever I do pasta, I start humming Tony Bennett or Dino (today it's "Ain't That a Kick in the Head?"). I really love doing that final squirt of emulsifying extra-virgin, just after the basil goes in.

"Chef," Omar says, "*no hay más tomates*." Wait a minute—I ordered tomatoes, didn't I? I call Segundo on the intercom. "What the fuck is going on?" I say, as Omar slouches in the doorway like a convict in the exercise yard. "No Baldor," he says. Although Baldor is a superb produce purveyor, this is the second time in recent weeks it's failed me. I call Baldor, and say, "What kind of glue-sniffing, crackhead mesomorphs you got working for you? You don't have an order for me? What?" I hang up, pull a few pans off the flame, load up some more mussels, sauce another duck, arrange a few pheasants, and check my orders clipboard. I'm in the middle of telling Mohammed to run across the street and ask the chef at Park Bistro if we can borrow some of his tomatoes when I see, from the columns of checked-off items on my clipboard, that I did order tomatoes—not from Baldor but from a different company. After screaming at the blameless Baldor, my anger is used up, so when I call the guilty company I can barely summon a serious tone. It turns out that my order has been routed to another restaurant—Layla, instead of Les Halles. I call Philippe, the chef at Park Bistro, to ask for a few tomatoes to get me through until my order arrives.

The guys from D'Artagnan, my specialty purveyor, arrive bearing foie gras, duck legs, and an entire two-hundred-pound free-range pig, which my boss, José, one of the owners of Les Halles, has ordered to be used in pâtés and *tête de porc*. The butcher, the charcutier, the dishwasher, and I wrestle the beast down the stairs to the *boucherie* in the cellar. My knees



"That's just so God."

• •

are hurting and a familiar pain in my feet is getting worse.

José stops by after lunch—he wants to take me to the Greenmarket in Union Square. We walk to the market, about eleven blocks south, where we sniff and squeeze a hundred different fruits and vegetables. We return to the restaurant with pears, lemon verbena, baby fennel, baby turnips with greens, and fingerling potatoes—the kind of expensive exotica that José likes to surprise me with, for new specials.

Dinner tasting for the floor staff is at five-thirty, which is when the veteran waiters—the lifers—arrive. This ritual is conducted in the kitchen, since there are usually a few lunch customers who insist on exercising squatters' rights straight into the dinner hour. Watching waiters eat is never pretty. They tear at the specials like starving refugees, ripping apart the pheasant with their bare hands, nearly spearing one another with forks as they go after the tuna, dragging the cockles off their shells with their fingers. After fifteen minutes, everything is devoured, and the waiters perch on milk crates, folding napkins, as they smoke and talk: Who got drunk last night? Who got thrown out of a Mob-run after-hours club, then woke up on the sidewalk outside their apartment? Who thinks the new maître d' is going to lose it when the room fills up and the customers start screaming for their tables? Who's going to win the World Cup?

As usual, dinner is oversubscribed, and two tables for twelve have been booked for prime time. I stay in the kitchen to expedite, hoping that maybe things will slow down enough by ten so that I can have a couple of cocktails and get home by eleven. But I know that the two big tables will hold up seatings by at least an hour, and that I probably won't get out of here until midnight, at the earliest.

By eight-thirty, the order board is full. To my right, plates of appetizers are lined up, waiting to be delivered; the counter is full of sauté pans; the worktable near the fry station, with its pile of raw steaks, looks like the floor of a slaughterhouse. Mohammed ferries the plates out by hand, four or five at a time. The hot food is getting cold, and I'm losing my voice as a result of calling out orders over the dishwasher, the hum of the exhaust, and the roar from the dining room. I make a hand gesture to a friendly waiter, who knows what I want, and he returns with an Industrial—a beer stein filled with a Margarita. The tequila takes the edge off my adrenaline,

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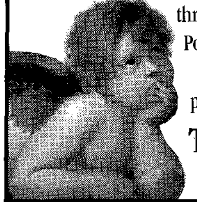

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and goes down surprisingly nicely after three double espressos, two beers, three cranberry juices, eight aspirins, and a hastily gobbled hunk of *merguez* sausage, squeezed into a heel of bread, that I've consumed since lunchtime.

Angel, my night man at the cold station, whose chest is tattooed with a skull impaled by a dagger wrapped in barbed wire, is falling behind; he's got three raviolis, two duck confits, five green salads, two escargots, two Belgian-endive-and-Stilton salads, two cockles, a smoked salmon and blini, two foie gras, and a pâté working—and the sauté and grill stations are calling urgently for vegetable sides and mashed potatoes. A steak order comes back for refiring, and Isidoro, the night grill man, is not happy; as far as he's concerned, the steak was cooked to perfection the first time around. He throws it back on the grill. Then a whole roasted fish comes back. "The customer wants it deboned," the waiter says. Anticipating decapitation, he whines, "I *told* them it comes on the bone."

The orders are arriving non-stop. My left hand grabs tickets, separates white ones for the grill man, yellow ones for the sauté man, and pink master copies, which I use to time and generally oversee the production. My right hand wipes plates, inserts rosemary sprigs into mashed potatoes. I'm yelling full time, trying to hold it all together. If there is an unforeseeable mishap—say, one of the big tables' orders was prematurely sent out, only to be returned—the whole process could come to a full stop. "Where's that fucking confit?" I yell at Angel, who's struggling to make blinis for smoked salmon, to brown ravioli under the salamander, to lay out plates of pâté, and to do five endive salads, all more or less at once. A hot escargot explodes in front of me, spattering me with boiling garlic butter and snail guts.

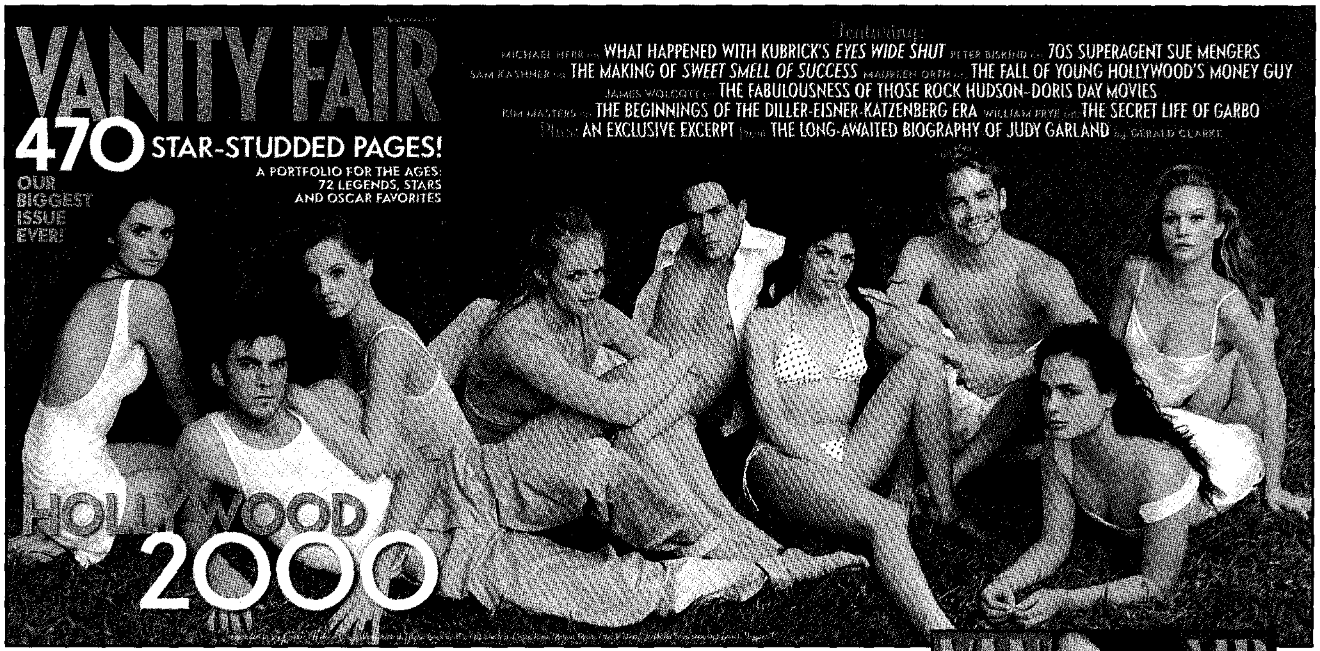
"*Platos!*" Isidoro screams at the guy who's washing dishes. He's buried up to his shoulders in the pot sink, and his prewash area is stacked with plates of unscraped leftovers and haphazardly dumped silver. I grab the Bengali busboy, Dinesh, by an arm. "Scrape!" I hiss, pointing to the mess of plates heaped with gnawed bones and half-eaten vegetables.

Directly behind me, the Portuguese busboy, David, is making espressos and cappuccinos. He's extremely graceful, and by now we know each other's every move in the narrow space—when to move laterally, when to make way for incoming dishes, outgoing food, or the fry guy returning from downstairs with a hundred pounds of freshly cut spuds. I feel only an occasional light tap on the shoulder as David squeezes through with another tray of coffee and petits fours, whispering "*Cuidado*"—"watch out."

Finally, the orders start slowing down, and I can see by the thinning crowd at the bar that the last seating is under way. I go to the cellar, where I check the stocks cooling in iced plastic buckets outside the walk-in, the gauze-wrapped pigs' feet, which will have to be painstakingly deboned tomorrow, the soaking *tarbais* beans, which will have to be blanched, the salt-rubbed duck legs, which will have to be conserved in duck fat. I make a final check of the drygoods room and note that I'll soon be needing more peanut oil, more peppercorns, more sherry-wine vinegar. I look at a list for tomorrow: I've already called for the striped bass, but I mustn't forget about the baby octopus. José loves black mission figs—he saw some at the market this afternoon—so I'll tell Janine to start thinking about figs for a dessert special. Tomorrow is Saturday, which means that I'll have to do the weekly inventory: weigh every scrap of meat and fish and cheese that's in storage; tally up every can, bottle, case, and box. I peel off my whites and struggle into my jeans. I'm on my way out the door when I'm stopped by Isidoro: he wants a raise. I tell him, "*Mañana*." Outside, the fresh air is a jolt. I look at my watch—12:25 A.M.—and wave for a taxi.

At Fiftieth and Broadway, I head into a subway entrance. Downstairs, in the arcade, I enter the Siberia Bar. It's a grungy little underground rumpus room where the drinks are served in plastic cups. Seated at the bar are a few cooks from the Hilton and a couple of strippers from a nearby club. I spot Tracy, the Siberia's owner: tonight I won't be paying for drinks. From the jukebox, the Velvets are singing "Pale Blue Eyes." That first rush of beer tastes good. I'm not going anywhere. ♦

STAR POWER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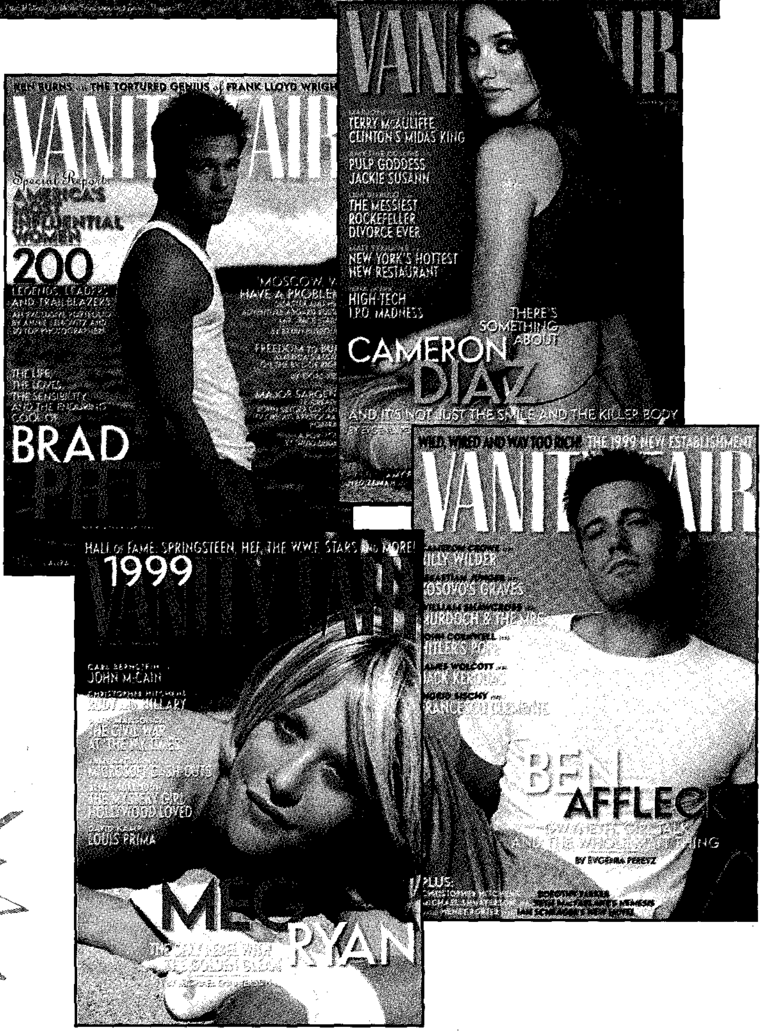
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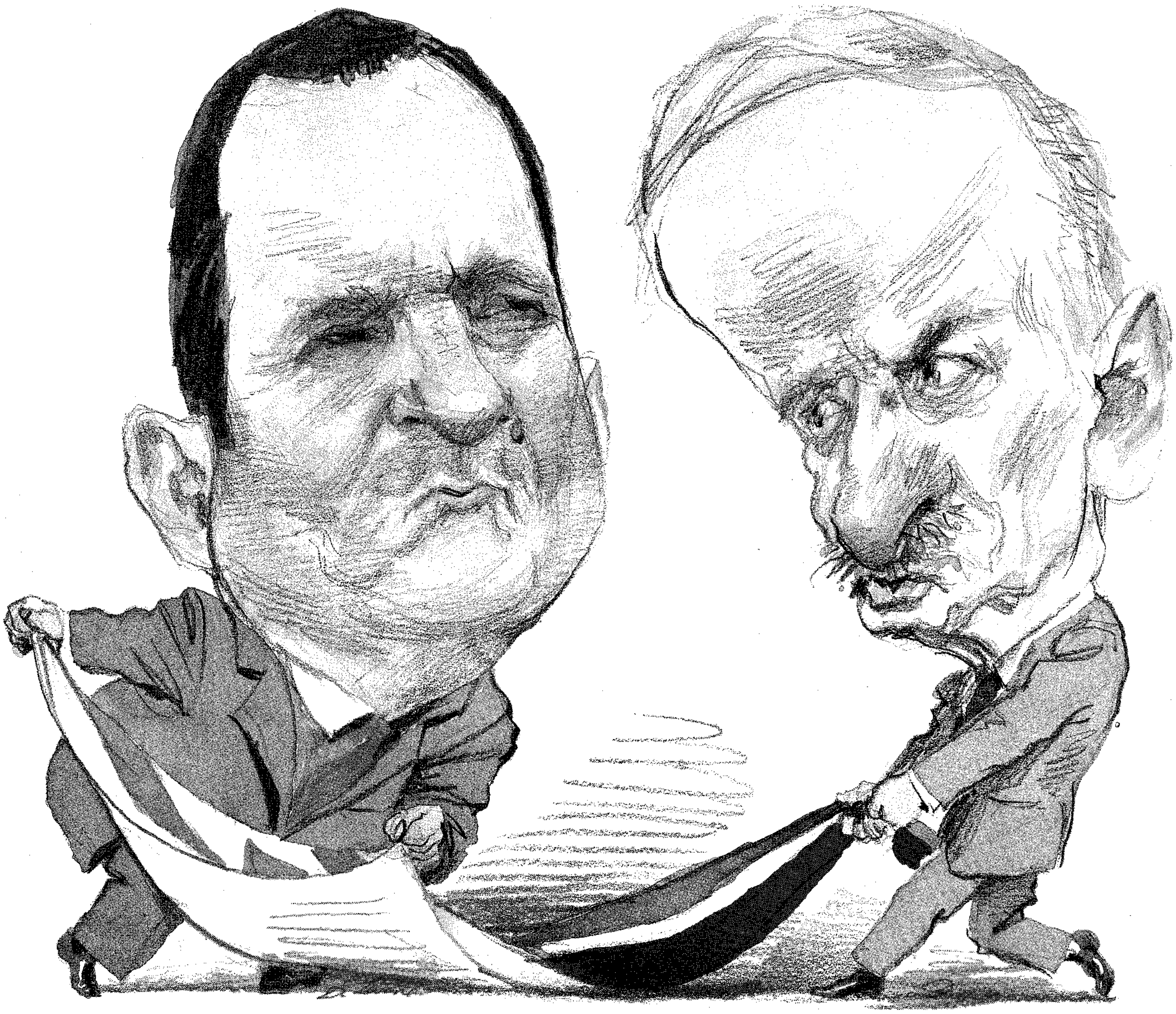


DAVID LEVINE

In 1962, a young Israeli lieutenant named Ehud Brog was chosen to lead a small group from a secret commando unit in a nighttime operation across the Syrian border. The unit, known as Sayeret Matkal, was the inspiration of a charismatic commander, Avraham Arnan, who had been struggling since the early fifties to find a reliable way of obtaining intelligence on the hostile states surrounding Israel. Numerous attempts to place agents or infiltrate Army fighters into Syria and other countries had failed. Most memorably, five soldiers had been captured inside the Syrian border as they tried to change the batteries in a listening device. Arnan's idea was to take the Army's best fighters and train them specifically for such missions. When, finally, the unit was created, its members went through several years of arduous physical training, lessons in explosives, and solitary nocturnal navigation exercises. The mission led by Brog was to be its first highly sensitive cross-border operation, and its chance to prove to a skeptical senior staff—many of whom saw Arnan as overzealous and a bit crazy, and had initially resisted his idea—

Can the Israeli leader safely act on his pledge to withdraw from Lebanon without an agreement from Syria's Hafez al-Assad?

that such maneuvers could succeed.

This was five years before Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria, in the Six-Day War, and so Brog and his soldiers headed north from an area near the Sea of Galilee, at the foot of the Golan. In such an operation, "you have only so much time, you must go the minute the sun goes down," one former Sayeret Matkal soldier told me. "There was a Syrian ambush, and they lost time. Ehud knew that the back-room commanding position would summon them back, so he turned his radio off. And it was a successful mission! It *established* the unit, as one that had the capability to do quiet intelligence operations across borders." Another former member of the unit, Uri Zakay, recalled that after the men returned from this mission the the chief of staff's driver arrived with a box of ten champagne bottles and a note that read, "For a brilliant performance, 12 bottles—minus 2 for disobeying orders." Brog also received his first medal for bravery.

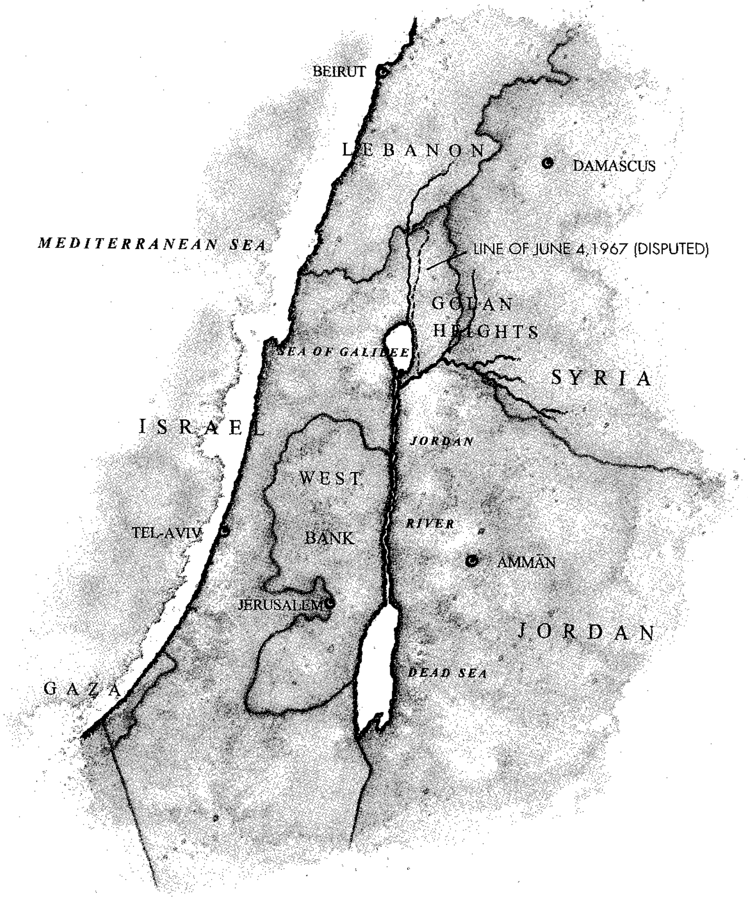
Brog went on to become commander of the unit, chief of military intelligence, chief of staff, and the most decorated soldier in the history of the Israel Defense Forces, or I.D.F. Along the way, he changed his name to Barak, which in Hebrew means "lightning." And now he is, of course, Prime Minister. Much has changed since that early exploit, but much has also remained the same. Upon assuming office, last summer, Barak took on another mission to Syria: an effort to make peace with Israel's most powerful and hostile border state—something that Israel's last three Prime Ministers had tried and failed to do. As was the case thirty-eight years ago, he encountered a delay, and, while many of his Cabinet ministers urged him to abandon his quest and to achieve an agreement with the impatient Palestinians instead, lest their frustration erupt in a renewed *intifada*, Barak appeared, in effect, to turn off his radio. Only now, two weeks after the Geneva summit between President Clinton and Syria's President Hafez al-Assad failed, has Barak acknowledged that this mission may not succeed. One person who has known him well for decades told me, "A soldier so decorated takes great risks. That is who Ehud is: a real commando soldier, going alone or with a very small group, not going straight but winding this way and that, climbing in trees, swimming in rivers, someone who first and foremost depends on himself to survive. This is the real Ehud Barak. And this is the way he is ruling the country."

I met with Barak recently, in his large, spartan office at the Prime Minister's headquarters in Jerusalem—the same office where, in the early nineties, he spent many hours in conversation with Yitzhak Rabin, when Rabin was Prime Minister and Barak was chief of staff. Two framed images look down on Barak at his desk: one of Rabin, who was his commander for dozens of years and his political mentor, and one of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, whose almost mythical status in this country's history Barak aspires to. The only other addition Barak has made to the office is not apparent. He is an accomplished pianist and often listens to classical music when he is working alone, and he has installed a sophisticated stereo system, hidden from view in the bookshelves. ("In Israel, it is not good to let people know that—it looks like you are too high," a friend explained. "It is better to say you listen to the Rolling Stones.") There is nothing in Barak's physical presence to suggest a legendary fighter. At fifty-eight, he is short, slightly stocky, round-faced, with a steady, self-contained gaze that he fixes on his visitor. But it is his mental force and agility that have always distinguished him; as he speaks, he builds themes with great clarity, dips lightly into a wide historical and literary frame of reference, seems pleased with his prolixity, amuses himself with his parentheticals, and pounces on passing ideas, the words tumbling over themselves in his eagerness to drive a point home.

To the extent that Barak allows himself an inner circle, it is made up mainly of veterans of Sayeret Matkal. When I asked him about the influence that Avraham Arnan and the Sayeret Matkal experience had had on him, Barak embarked on an enthusiastic exposition. "Arnan created something from scratch, and he shaped it in such a way that it did not accept the conventional wisdom or the rules of the game," he said. He pointed out that many of Israel's military, security, and political leaders, including his political opponent and immediate predecessor, Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu, have come from the unit, which in the beginning had only about thirty soldiers. "You know, Arnan sent an intellectual named Natan Shacham, who had been in the Palmach"—the élite "shock troops" of the Haganah, the I.D.F.'s precursor—"to write a history of this unit. And he met me, and he began to interview me. He told me he had followed what happened to the youngsters of the Palmach: the few who shaped that underground unit later shaped the security of this nation. And he said, 'What I am interested in is the way in which élites are shaped and lead.' For me, it was quite striking. At that moment, to see myself as part of an élite! Every captain could attack me, and give me orders!" Barak laughed. "But there was some insight in what he said. Is it this unit that shaped the individuals, or maybe something different? Probably it is a combination. But it became a kind of center of attraction for young, quite unorthodox, nonconformist individuals, who later on became people that were nonconformist and active and eager to do, not just to talk, and not admitting the rules."

In 1963, Barak spent three months training with a French commando unit. "The first weekend, we were watching TV, and there was coverage for some ten hours of climbing a peak in the French Alps. I was mesmerized!" A few days later, he began climbing cliffs as part of the training course, and he learned that the ability to survive is based on "very careful planning and very careful behavior." He went on, "When you are walking very close to the cliff, you have to behave in a very risk-averse way. I told people, 'We are not adventurous! We are very careful, risk-averse people that train ourselves through self-discipline to operate under the toughest conditions, where the risk aversion and careful preparation compensate for the risk environment.' So you can walk very close to the cliff—if you make sure that every step is stable."

Sayeret Matkal is still an important force in the Israeli military. (It became famous in the early seventies, when it undertook anti-terrorist operations, including freeing hostages from a Sabena aircraft at the Tel Aviv airport, in 1972, and in Entebbe, in 1976. In 1973, Barak himself, dressed as a woman, led a raid into Lebanon and participated in the assassination of three P.L.O. leaders.) Barak attributes Sayeret Matkal's vitality to "the spirit of doing not the really impossible but things that *seem* to be impossible, and very carefully." He said of its members, "When I commanded them as head of intelligence and then chief of staff, I noticed that they are doing things that we could not even imagine." He recalled that, at one point in the eighties, a young major, Moses (Boogy) Yalon, who is now a high-ranking general, came to see him. "He described to me certain operations that he dreamed of being able to accomplish. . . . And it took him five years, but it happened! A great, major breakthrough! So somehow the secret comes out of the spirit of freedom—freedom to dare to do, freedom to dare to think in such an unconventional way, and to analyze the situation very carefully, very systematically. That is why it took five years—it was not just waiting for a lottery! It's a careful, detailed work, to identify obstacles, and either to remove them or find a way to by-pass them.



The hostile border: Assad lost the Golan in the 1967 Six-Day War, and he has wanted it back, down to the last inch, ever since.

"I kept this approach all along my life, whatever I've done: when I was heading our intelligence community or as chief of staff or as operations officer, or even then as a politician—" Barak broke off, with a sudden gust of laughter. "I don't feel a politician, even now! I don't feel a politician! When someone approaches me, and uses the word—in Hebrew, it's *politikai*—I have to pass a tenth of a second to realize that I am one of them!"

Barak's admission would surprise none of his ministers; most see his transition from military to political life as unfinished business at best. And although his military mind-set has created a host of problems—mainly because of his autocratic style and his inveterate distrust of politicians, including members of his own Labor Party ("The inner Cabinet," a popular saying goes, "is between the left and right ears of Ehud Barak")—it seemed that it might also prove to be his strength. It is, in any event, the lens through which the most critical decisions of his first nine months as Prime Minister may be most clearly viewed. Employing his characteristic approach of "not admitting the rules," he overturned dogma on two of the most burning issues in Israel today. First, he set a deadline for a withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon—preferably as part of a peace agreement with Syria (so that Syria could insure quiet on Israel's northern border), but unilaterally if there was no agreement. Israel began its occupation of southern Lebanon eighteen years ago; whenever Israeli Prime Ministers have considered withdrawal, they have deemed it too risky, because it would leave Hezbollah guerrilla fighters and other militants in Lebanon free to attack Israel. Second, he announced that he would pursue two peace agreements simultaneously—with Syria and with the Palestinians—despite the fact that his predecessors on the peace course, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, believed that to win the public's support for two agreements involving territorial concessions was a political impossibility.

Whenever Barak assumed a new military post, he defined his mission, setting a timetable, with specific dates, and planning how he would arrive at his objective. Upon becoming Prime Minister, he did the same thing. The announcement of a deadline for the withdrawal from southern Lebanon was only one piece of a far larger objective; as he told several friends, his agenda was nothing less than to transform the country. In the first two years of his term, he planned to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in the second two years to change the structure of Israeli society, by narrowing the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Those grand ambitions—"things that *seem* to be impossible"—have been sorely tested, and still seem to be impossible. A peace agreement with Syria's Assad, which appeared to be all but within Barak's grasp a month ago, may have eluded him, and he is faced with carrying out his pledge of a withdrawal from Lebanon without a Syrian agreement, an outcome that he plainly hoped to avoid. In effect, Barak placed a high-stakes bet, and Assad, by his intransigence, has called him on it.

Until Barak joined Sayeret Matkal, at eighteen, there had been few outward signs that he would ever distinguish himself. His parents immigrated to Palestine from Eastern Europe in the

MIKE REAGAN

thirties. (His maternal grandparents, who remained in Warsaw, perished at Treblinka.) He grew up on a small, provincial kibbutz—"so small that to have an ice cream we had to go out"—where he was known mainly for two talents: playing the piano and picking locks. (He never lost a lock-picking contest; legend has it that on one occasion he picked a hundred.) He was expelled from high school for discipline problems. After he was drafted, he joined a nondescript armored-tank division. Word of his lock-picking and nighttime navigation abilities travelled to Sayeret Matkal, however, and he was recruited to the intense, almost messianic society that had been created by Avraham Arnan. Uri Zakay, who entered the unit around the same time as Barak, recalls that on Friday evenings the soldiers would put on white shirts, gather in the dining room, and listen to Arnan read from the diary of the Israeli commando Meir Har-Zion, whom Moshe Dayan once described as the greatest scout of the Jewish people. According to Zakay, each Friday Arnan would read another chapter, "as a religious Jew would read the Torah." The bonds forged between the soldiers were extraordinary, even for Israel's traditionally close-knit military. "There was no doubt that we would die for each other," Jacob Tal, another unit member, said. "To this day, there is an amazing sense of loyalty, absolute trust."

Arnan was the first of many senior Israeli officers to predict that Barak would one day be chief of staff. The Sayeret Matkal missions required physical fortitude, and Barak was strong, but that was not his advantage. "He was *anti*-macho," another member of the unit, Daniel Michaelson, told me. (He opened his wallet to show me the unit's secret pin, which the soldiers used to wear hidden, attached to the inside of their collars.) "He was thin, like a match. I remember, once, we were at an event in Paris. He was wearing a suit, and he had this thin mustache—he looked like a young Charlie Chaplin. He was all cerebral—think, and act." Barak was considered bright, articulate, very cool under pressure, and possessed of an unusual confidence. "Even when he was eighteen or nineteen, he spoke with the sense that he was right," Tal said. What was probably most striking about him, however, was his drive. "I remember, he had just gotten promoted to something still quite low, I think a second lieutenant," Michaelson recalled, "and he was interviewed by the chief of Army Intelligence, who asked him what his plans were. And Ehud answered, 'To sit in your chair.' "

In 1965, Barak left the military. He had concluded that the country was moving toward peace, and that the real springboards would be education and technology. "I remember his analogy," Tal said. "Not only did he want to get to the top of the hill but he wanted to take the most direct path to the top. 'I want to be in the position of maximum influence,' he said when he was twenty-three." Barak and Michaelson studied math and physics together at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. But then, in 1967, came the Six-Day War, in which Israel defeated Syria and won the Golan Heights. Barak began to revise his view of the importance of the military in Israeli society, and rejoined the Army. He ascended in a calculated way; as soon as he arrived in one job, friends say, he was already positioning himself for the next, and he was frequently criticized as someone who spent too much time cultivating his superiors. (To be fair, he also cultivated a sweetheart, Nava Cohen, a former soldier in the Intelligence unit; they married in 1969, and have three children.) Some thought that he was consumed by his ambition, and, except for his family, had little interest in human connections. Michaelson says that when he was studying science at the University of California at Berkeley, and Barak was studying engineering at Stanford, Michaelson was very much in love with a girl, and the affair ended: "I went to cry to Ehud. He questioned me about her for two hours, in the greatest detail—her eyes, her lips. Then, after I described her for all this time, he said, 'There are two hundred women like her!' And we laughed. Now, you can say that that shows he has no emotion, no sense of human relationships—or that he knew exactly what he was doing, and it was very clever, a kind of psychotherapy."

Barak was apparently disappointed in his steady rise only once—in 1986, when Rabin, then Defense Minister, chose someone more senior as chief of staff. Barak is said to have thought of leaving the military then but was persuaded by Rabin and others to stay. Five years later, he got the job—the most important position, next to those of Prime Minister and Defense Minister.

Amram Mitzna, who is now the mayor of Haifa, worked with Barak as the Army's chief of planning. "I think Ehud Barak's personality is the best combination of qualities of anyone I have ever met," Mitzna told me. "He sees strategic things in general, but he also goes into the details. He has a rapid and quick understanding—if you are taking five or six sentences to explain something to him, he grasps it in the first. He is very brave in battle and in the decision-making process. He takes on issues very sharply, directly, unemotionally, and comes to very logical conclusions. Art, music, theatre, literature—you can talk to him on any subject you like. If you put his behavior in a computer, you get ten out of ten.

"The problem is if you want to get sensitivity or an emotional approach," Mitzna continued. "People want to know that you have some weakness, that if a girl walks by on a beautiful sunny day you will look at her, and you will know that people see you looking. They want to work for someone who is a human being, someone who feels some fear, some respect, some love, some hate. Ehud is not the kind of person for whom people will lie on a fence"—a Hebrew expression from ancient times, when soldiers would lie on a spiked fence so that others could conquer a hill by going over their backs. "There are models of people like this in the military, whom people will follow blindfolded. Ehud was not that. So he gained the support of people, but not from the stomach, as we say." He added, "Part of what people want—from those on the street to high-ranking officials—is that someone will listen to them. And Ehud is not a good listener. Even though you get the idea after the first sentence, let the person finish his five sentences!"

Barak's self-regard tends to hamper those who work for him, Mitzna said. "When you think that you know better than everyone else, you have no room for them to do things for you. So you

"I laughed so hard I almost scent-marked."

intervene, and this destroys any spirit of support."

As chief of staff, Barak made decisions to invest in the long-term development of precision-guided missiles and other secret "accurate armaments"—decisions that helped modernize the Israeli military but were controversial. "He took money from very important parts of the Army, and he could have failed, because if a war had emerged we were in a very complicated situation," a friend of Barak's told me. "I'm making up the numbers, but say you take a hundred million dollars earmarked for forty thousand shells and spend it instead on accurate weapons that will not be ready for eight years—it was a big decision. But he brought the I.D.F. to be the most advanced army no doubt in the Middle East, and maybe more than that."

During this time, Barak grew close to Rabin, who was the first chief of staff to become Prime Minister. As a young lieutenant, Barak had often been summoned to Rabin's office before a commando operation. "He was the greatest believer in Murphy's law," Barak recalled, smiling. "He used to believe *everything* would go wrong, so he asked me to come show him the details ahead of time. He was obsessed with details." Now Barak addressed broader issues with Rabin. "Rabin admired his brain," Eitan Haber, Rabin's speechwriter and *chef de bureau*, told me. "Rabin used him as an unofficial adviser on political issues, internal issues. He was in the Prime Minister's office for hours and hours. Also, he wrote long memos to Rabin, on every subject you can think of, from flying to the moon to the desalination of the Caspian Sea."

The two men were hardly cast from the same mold. Rabin was apprehensive, sensitive, and so shy that he tended not to look directly at the person he was speaking to; his handshake was barely a touch. He was less intellectual than Barak, and certainly his ambition was less consuming. He approached big decisions through an almost painfully labored analysis. And yet Rabin and Barak were similar in their military grounding and their political outlook. Unlike Shimon Peres, Rabin's Foreign Minister, an ardent humanist who had come to believe that it was a moral necessity for Israel to make peace (at least with the Palestinians), and that former enemies could become partners in a "new Middle East," Rabin and Barak viewed the subject of peace with the Arabs in a more hardheaded way. Both were deeply suspicious of the Arabs, and were convinced that peace with them was possible not because they no longer hated Israel but because they realized they could not win in war. Rabin stood firmly in the center of Israel's political landscape—Uri Savir, one of the architects of the Oslo agreement, once called him a "Midwestern Israeli"—and so did Barak. "He was the most hawkish and centrist in his own party," Barak commented. "Quite similar to my position."

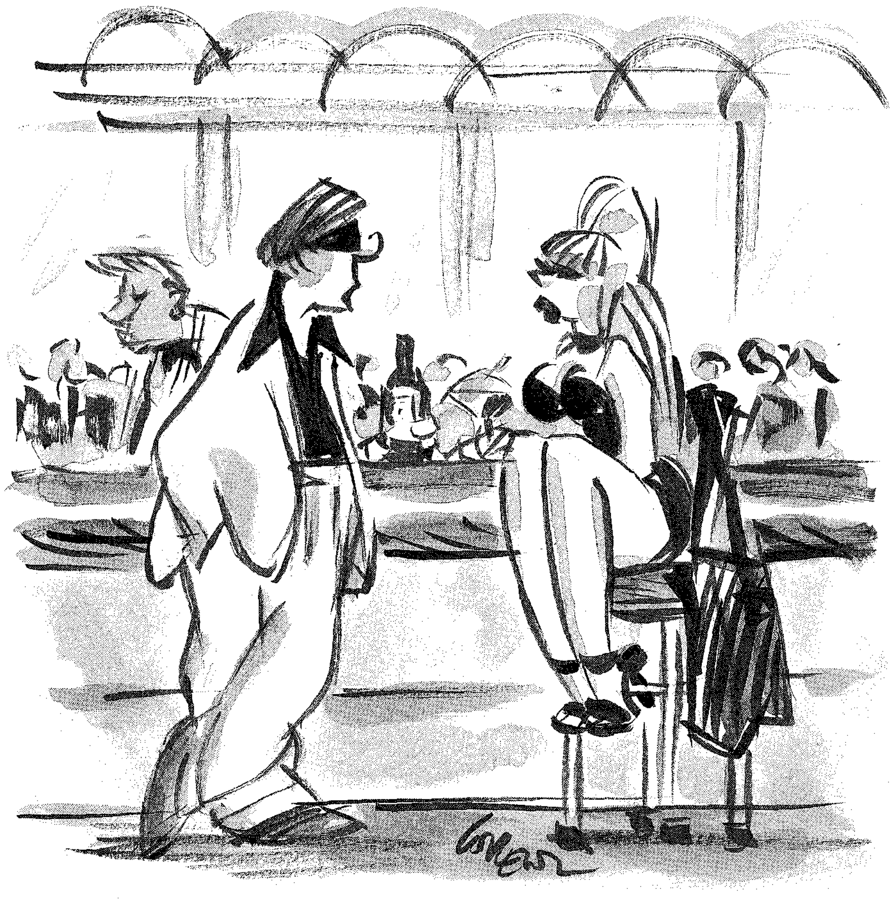
It was probably because of this relationship, and Rabin's habit of consulting him, that Barak was so angry when Rabin did not inform him of the Oslo agreement—reached in secret by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators—until shortly before it was signed, in September of 1993. When Barak was told of the terms, he is said to have warned Rabin, "Yitzhak, be careful, we have a lot of holes! It's like a Swiss cheese." Two years later, when Oslo II was put to a vote in the Knesset, Barak—who by that time had retired from the Army and been summoned by Rabin to join his Cabinet—abstained. Now Rabin was furious; Barak's abstention was seized on by the right as proof of the agreement's flaws. ("I hardly could sleep the night before," Barak told me, "but I felt there was no meaning to come to politics but to express my real judgment.") He felt strongly about this principle; while his "Swiss cheese" remark, made when he was chief of staff, referred in part to security issues, he had a more profound, political disagreement with the Oslo accords. Oslo was structured so that the most difficult issues (including the delineation of borders, the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, and Palestinian refugees) were to be resolved in "permanent-status negotiations" years after an interim period during which Israel would withdraw, in phases, from much of the occupied territories. Why, Barak demanded, should Israel hand over so much territory, and bargaining power, before coming to the table to negotiate the toughest issues?

The assassination of Rabin, in November of 1995, dramatically accelerated Barak's rise. Peres, who succeeded Rabin, was defeated by Netanyahu in elections the following May. A year later, in June, 1997, Barak challenged Peres for leadership of the Labor Party and—in a bitter, hard-fought contest—defeated him; he also vaulted over younger rivals who had been active in politics for many years. Barak then paid a visit to the new British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, whose campaign Barak had studied, and Blair suggested that he get in touch with two of his campaign strategists, Stanley Greenberg and Philip Gould, who were both veterans of the 1992 Clinton campaign. (Robert Shrum and James Carville later joined the campaign.) Not surprisingly, Barak was taken with the war room. "He liked the rapid-response systems, the data banks," one of his strategists says. "He wanted the organizational charts for the Blair and Clinton war rooms—he must've asked for them a thousand times. He was a general in the way he approached his campaign." Barak decided not to use the existing Labor Party organization. "He felt it would stab him in the back," Jacob Tal, his friend from commando days, said. "So he created a sharp pyramid—with a lot of people from Sayeret Matkal." Barak asked Hagai Shalom, a retired major general and an engineer, to build him a fresh apparatus, for a get-out-the-vote campaign. "People went to Ehud and they said, 'It's suicide! This guy doesn't know anything about a political campaign!' " Shalom recalls. But Barak relied on him, and other political novices, too, who became known in the campaign as "Ehud's generals." "Ehud doesn't have a great appreciation for political figures," Shalom commented. "Those of us from the I.D.F. are generally suspicious of political figures."

Through much of 1998, Barak could not find his footing as a candidate. In March, he made a mistake that a more seasoned politician never would have made, answering a hypothetical question about how his life would have turned out had he been born a Palestinian. Barak—instinctively cautious from the time he was a young man about saying or doing anything that might impede his rise—slipped, and said what he thought: that he would probably have joined a terrorist group. "Until then, he was ahead of Bibi in the polls, running as Mr. Security," one of his strategists told me, "but he dropped about twenty points. People don't want a leader of Israel saying that, even if they know it's true. After that, Bibi was leading him on every security aspect. That was the toughest thing for Ehud—to realize that he couldn't win on security alone. That was when he began to talk about domestic issues." Those issues—mainly jobs and schools—became a major platform of his campaign.

It took Barak close to nine months to recover from his blunder. Even his own party members attacked him, and throughout 1998 his attempt to unseat Netanyahu was considered almost quixotic. Amnon Shahak, who had been Barak's deputy when he was chief of staff, joined the newly formed Center Party to run against him. Those who met with him during these bleak months say they never saw him exhibit anything but steeliness, patience, an unshakable confidence—and stubbornness. Stanley Greenberg, who worked on polling for Barak, said, "He really needed media advice, but it took nine months of lobbying to persuade him to get a TV person, even though he was being criticized regularly." Greenberg recalled how he and Carville worried that Barak was simply too inexperienced a candidate. But then, in late December, Netanyahu agreed to call for early elections, sometime in the first half of 1999. "All these people were sitting around, talking about Barak's going into a unity government. He walked in, and various ones started to advise him. He said, 'I don't go into a unity government with Netanyahu. Period! He is untrustworthy, and I will not be in a government with him.' Then he went on TV—and it was as though he'd been preparing until then. *Whoosh*—he lifted to a new level." Barak's apparent act of principle turned out to be good politics. "After that, it began to happen—Bibi was seen as glib, Barak the genuine person who could be trusted."

Nonetheless, the numbers did not turn decisively in Barak's favor until the last few weeks before the election, in May; he won by a landslide, with fifty-six per cent of the vote. Recently, with Barak's ministers telling him he was making a fateful mistake in giving priority to the Syrian track—and sketching for him a doomsday scenario with the Palestinians, and the imminent fall of his government—an American official who has known Barak for years



"I know you're wired to respond to successful older men, but what are you doing in the meantime?"

commented, "Ehud was thinking, These are the same people who said I couldn't get elected!"

The Syrians had fascinated Barak for many years. He had had his first exposure to Syria, of course, as a young commando. He had succeeded in planting a new kind of explosive device in a sensitive area and had penetrated a Syrian military base. Such exploits had persuaded him that this enemy was no match for him. But later, he says, when he became chief of military intelligence, "I was for the first time exposed to what Syria is really about." Through intelligence operations, the Israelis had obtained a protocol reporting internal discussions among leaders of the Ba'th, Syria's ruling party, which had gained full control of the state in the sixties and shaped its ideology with a radical secular version of Arab nationalism. Reading this document, Barak realized that there was a "very high-quality discussion—the positions were anti-Israel, *crazy*, but it was very systematic, a kind of Marxist way of thinking, with the logic of historical determinism." Barak now realized that Israel had a sophisticated enemy. "We had a certain sense that, oh, *we* are so sophisticated—but when you look at some of *our* mistakes!"

Over the next couple of decades, it was Hafez al-Assad who came to most fully personify that sophistication. Assad was a member of the Alawis, a poor, rural Islamic sect, long persecuted by Syria's Sunni Muslim majority. Like many other Alawis, Assad chose the military as a path to upward mobility. In 1963, he was a member of a small group that masterminded a coup to bring the Ba'th to power; a smaller cadre within that group then eliminated the rest and, eventually, one another, until, surprisingly, Assad—seen as a lacklustre, ponderous politician—emerged victorious, seizing full power in 1970. He had constructed his power base within the Army and the Party (both dominated by the Alawis), in what would become his signature style; Karim Pakardouni, a Lebanese politician, wrote, "In carrying out his designs, Assad is implacable, cautious, and unyielding. He has built his authority stone by stone."

It was an approach that Barak witnessed when Assad invaded Lebanon, in the spring of 1976, taking his first steps toward creating the hegemony he has there today. (He maintains thirty-five thousand troops, controls the political hierarchy, and is, in effect, the arbiter of Lebanon's destiny.) The P.L.O. had by this time established a kind of mini-state in Lebanon, from which it was launching attacks on Israel, and had also helped spark a civil war there, between Christians and Muslims (mainly allied with the P.L.O.). Assad, surprisingly, came into Lebanon to shore up the Christians against the P.L.O. Barak recalled that he and his colleagues in military intelligence would meet once a month, trying to assess what Assad was likely to do—"from the very serious steps that would lead to full-scale war, maybe, to more limited steps." Soon they would see that he had "done something between the least that we had predicted and zero. After another two weeks, another move. We found he always went in a very careful way, too low to give any justification, or even reason, to respond. Yet after a year he accumulated results much beyond what we, at the beginning, thought would lead to a major, dramatic explosion of the Middle East! So I noticed that we are dealing with a highly calculated, risk-averse, sophisticated autocrat."

Barak was not alone in his grudging esteem. Assad was a brutal dictator—in 1982, he put down a rebellion in the city of Hama by massacring, according to estimates, between ten and twenty-five thousand of his own citizens—but he also succeeded in forming a durable government, following years of instability, and he conducted a foreign policy that made Syria into a regional power. Perhaps it was, in a way, Western diplomats' knowledge of his savage ruthlessness that caused them to be so taken with his urbane side; there was a certain thrill in knowing that this man, who had such a legalistic turn of mind, and weighed each word as though life depended on it, could erase life as though it were a word. Three American Secretaries of State—Henry Kissinger, James Baker, and Warren Christopher—all came away from marathon meetings with Assad amazed at his prodigious memory, his powers of concentration, his strategic insight, his wiliness, and his charm. Kissinger's dictum that "the Arabs cannot make war without Egypt or peace without Syria" was a salute to Assad's preëminence as the standard-bearer for Arab nationalism.

Still, for all his success in achieving a kind of stature for himself and, by extension, for Syria, something fundamental has eluded Assad—the Golan Heights, lost to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, when he was acting Defense Minister and commander of the Air Force. Rivals blamed him for decisions that, they said, had led to Syria's humil-

"Sometimes I fear that wheat germ has been lost in the health-food shuffle."

OF THE LIGHT

That watery light, so undervalued
except when evaluated, which never happens
much, perhaps even not at all—I intend to conserve it
somehow, in a book, in a dish, even at night,
like an insect in a light bulb.

Yes, day may just be breaking. The importance isn't there
but in the beautiful flights of the trees
accepting their own flaccid destiny,
or the tightrope of seasons.
We get all scared when we look at them up close,
but the king doesn't mind. He has the tides to worry about,

and how fitting is the new mood of contentment
and how long it will wear thin.

I look forward to seeing you so much
I have dragged the king from his lair: There,
take that, you old wizard. Wizard enough, he replies,
but this isn't going to save us from the light
of breakfast, or mend the hole in your stocking.
"Now wait"—and yet another day has consumed itself,
brisk with passion and grief, crisp as an illustration in a magazine
from the thirties, when we and this light were all that mattered.

—*John Ashbery*

iating defeat. Assad silenced such criticism when he came to power, but the charges apparently continued to sting. He lost the Golan, and he has wanted it back, down to the last inch, ever since.

It was not until the early nineties, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Syria's patron, that Barak, then chief of staff, began to think seriously about achieving peace with this skilled adversary. He and Rabin spent many hours—just "four eyes," as Barak says—discussing the advantages of achieving a peace treaty with Syria first (before the Palestinians, before the Jordanians). This was also the approach that the State Department favored. It made sound strategic sense. Syria was the last hostile state on Israel's border with a force capable of going to war; Assad was strong enough at home to deliver what he promised; the pact would entail peace with Lebanon and, in southern Lebanon, control of Hezbollah, the radical Shiite Muslim guerrillas supported by Israel's enemy Iran and by Syria. (It is Syria that gives Hezbollah license to attack Israeli forces in Lebanon.) The pact would also further isolate Iran. According to Barak, Rabin was convinced, too, that a deal with Assad would "shape the ground" in a way that would make the rest of the problem—that is, the Palestinians—easier to solve. But Assad at that time moved glacially, as though he felt eternity was his. A State Department official told me that Assad used to quote an Arabic proverb: "Haste is for the devil." Barak says that Rabin so much preferred the "Syria first" option that, even after he knew he could make the Oslo deal with Yasir Arafat, he kept trying for a breakthrough with Assad; receiving no real encouragement, he went with Arafat instead, much to Assad's chagrin.

After Oslo, however, Rabin persevered with Assad, and in the fall of 1994 he sent Barak to talks with the Syrians in Washington. Barak was still chief of staff but was set to retire in a few weeks, and it was in a way his début as a statesman. By this time, Israel had reached agreement not only with the Palestinians but with Jordan, too. Assad, the self-declared keeper of the flame of Arab nationalism, was scornful of the other deals, which he considered degrading; his sense of primacy had also been challenged. At a meeting in November, Barak went for a walk in the courtyard of Blair House with Walid Mouallem, then the Syrian ambassador to the United States, and sought to reassure him, off the record, about Israel's view of Syria's unique strategic importance. "I told him, 'Look, the peace is like an arch that has to be built. We put the cornerstone on with the Egyptians. It's not a structure yet. It's only when you put the *keystone*, and make a comprehensive peace with all the players.' And I told him, 'When we get to the table, we will be reasonable if you will be reasonable.' " Mouallem reported the conversation to Assad, Barak said. "But he just ignored the fact that it had not been said around the table for the record—that the actual record of the conversation did not reach this point." The next meeting, in December, was attended by Barak and his counterpart, the Syrian chief of staff, General Hikmat Shihabi, a confidant of Assad, and someone known as a tough, doctrinaire foe of Israel. The Syrians apparently expected Barak to begin by striking the expansive note he had struck with Mouallem, but Barak instead reiterated, for the record, Israel's basic positions regarding security. Assad seemed displeased by the meeting and refused to send Shihabi back for a second round of negotiations in January. Later, more talks were held, but they came to nothing. "Somehow," Barak said, "we lost the opportunity under Rabin."

That opportunity was one that Barak, as Prime Minister, was determined not to lose again. Moreover, since the toughest issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians remained to be negotiated, roughly six years after the initial Oslo signing, Barak seemed to believe that he had a chance to rewrite history, to a degree—to do a version of "Syria first," after all.

It was, of course, a delicate matter: hiding any favoritism, trying to court the one—tantalizingly close but still inaccessible—while holding on to the hand of the other, already a partner. Obsessed as Barak was with a Syrian deal, there obviously would be no end to the Arab-Israeli conflict without a Palestinian agreement as well. But, at least during the first months after he took office, on July 6th, he appeared to believe that the final Palestinian deal would follow a Syrian deal, almost as a corollary. "All along the way, Barak thought we should go first with Syria, because then it will be easier to reach an agreement with the Palestinians," Danny Yatom, a retired Army general who was in Sayeret Matkal with Barak and is now the coördinator of the peace tracks, told me. After a Syrian deal, the Palestinians "would be the last ones left," he said. "To be left as the last one is very problematic."

Compared with a Palestinian deal, in which the issues were so large, complex, and invested with symbolism as to almost defy resolution, and in which major, painful compromises would inevitably be required from both sides, a Syrian deal seemed beguilingly simple. The Golan—a high, majestic ridge, running between Israel and Syria—serves as a perpetual visual reminder to Assad of his loss. Before, Syrian military positions pointed down from there into Israel; now Israeli positions can train their sights on Damascus. And many diplomatic observers have thought that Assad—old, ill, concerned about preparing for the smooth succession of his son, Bashar, and bequeathing him a relatively stable situation—wanted the Golan back more urgently than ever.

The formula for a deal has been more or less clear for years. Assad wants the Golan, extending from what he calls the June 4, 1967, line. The Israelis argue that no such "line" actually exists, and would have to be drawn. Assad also wants the shore of the Sea of Galilee to be under Syrian sovereignty. Israel wants security arrangements that will compensate for its current strategic advantage of occupying the Golan, exclusive water rights to the Sea of Galilee (which provides about forty per cent of Israel's water supply), and normalization of relations. An agreement, therefore, would not require a great deal of imagination—just the determination of both parties.

During Barak's military career, he would focus so intently on a target that he let nothing else intrude ("Ehud is like a missile—once he is going in that direction, you cannot change his mind, he

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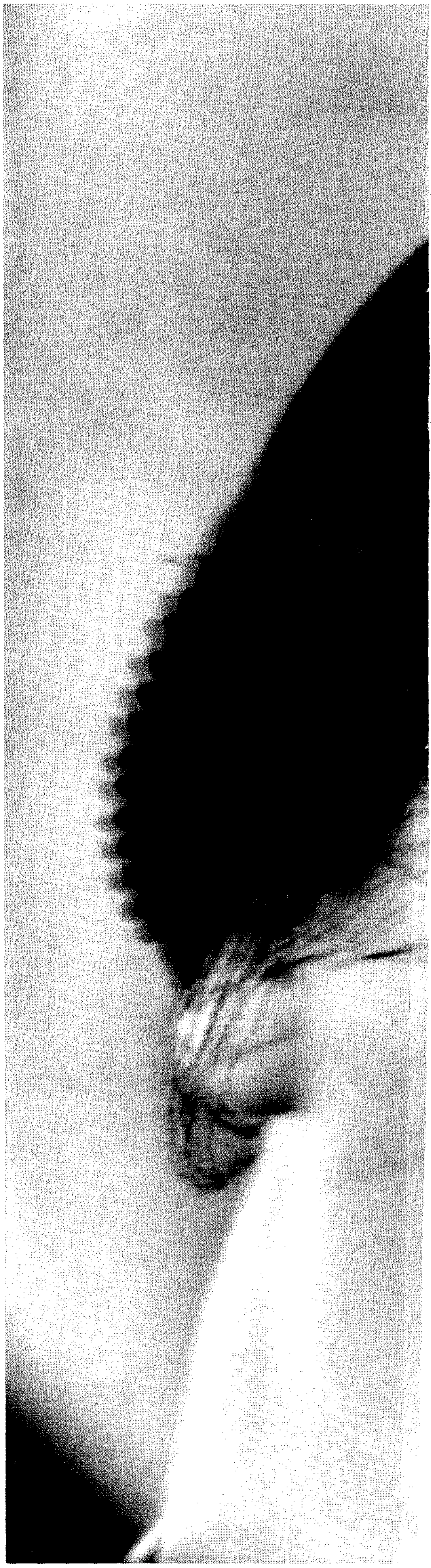
In 1933, as the painter John Gutmann (1905-98) prepared to flee Nazi Germany, he realized that he probably wasn't going to make it in Depression-era America as a figurative Expressionist. His backup plan was almost as improbable, but it worked: he bought a Rolleiflex, took three test rolls, made friends at a few Berlin photoweeklies, and set sail for San Francisco.

On the evidence of his photographs, he loved his new country. His shots from the thirties—of bareback riders, cartwheeling majorettes, drive-ins, divers, Basie-band dancers, and the American women he found so mysterious—chronicle what he called "the restless decade" and its "marvellous extravagance." The woman in "Turning to Look," for example, dodges the camera, and as she does the veil rises on the dark, hidden half of her face. He titled an image from the previous year, of a slim, purposeful woman in a polka-dot dress and an impenetrably veiled white bonnet, "Death Stalks Fillmore."

Gutmann did not abandon photography once he established himself, but later he claimed that he took assignments only when he needed to buy his wife a fur. With his curmudgeonly critiques and his death's-head lapel pin, he became a fixture on the San Francisco art scene for the next fifty years. He founded a photography department at San Francisco State, but neither students nor professors knew of his store of negatives until his retirement in the early seventies, when he went back to the darkroom to print his work again. Perhaps this was always part of the plan. In May, these photographs will be published by Merrell, and "Culture Shock," an exhibition devoted largely to the stylish fascinations of his first years in America, travels to L.A. MOCA in August.

—*Kevin Conley*



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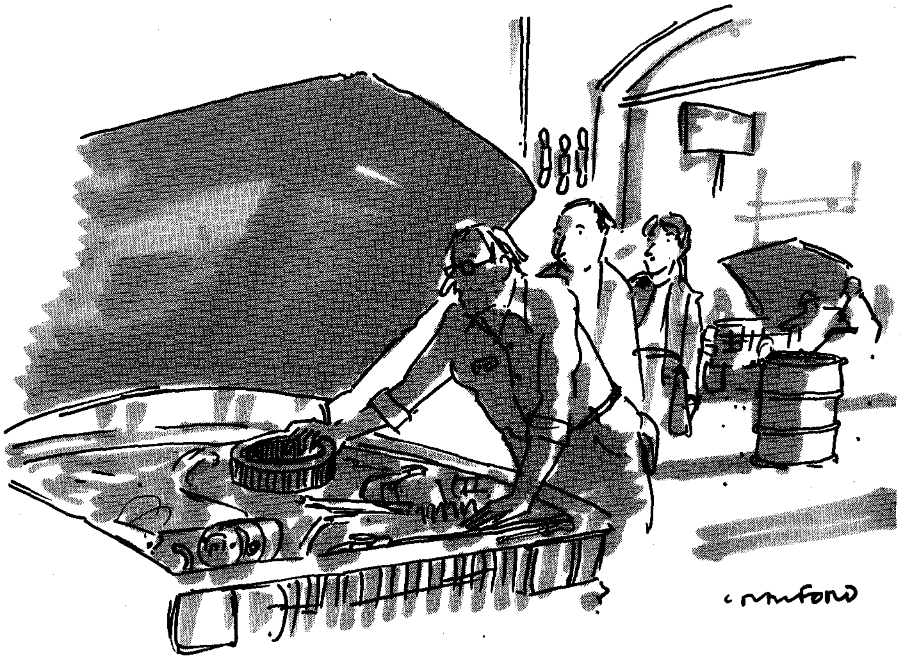


“I ~~know~~ there’s nothing wrong with the carburetor. I’m just interested in the stories it has to tell.”

• •

is *going,*” Hagai Shalom said), and it was no different now. The domestic issues he had talked about in his campaign would have to wait for his attention; besides, Barak was convinced that peace with Syria would cure some of Israel’s economic ills, by expanding trade links with the rich Gulf states. (Once, describing a hoped-for ceremony on the White House lawn, Barak spoke of President Assad’s being “surrounded by twelve golden *gallabiyas.*”) As usual, he established a timetable, with specific dates for signal events. And, because of the pivotal role Barak needed President Clinton to play, that timetable called for momentous undertakings to proceed with almost military precision. In the Middle East, Clinton carries none of the baggage he does at home; indeed, in this region, where suspicion is endemic, he is the person whom the Syrians, the Palestinians, and the Israelis trust most. Therefore, Barak decided he would need Clinton’s help, both to clinch any deals and to obtain the necessary funding from Congress (estimated at more than seventy billion dollars, over fifty years).

Probably the most critical date in Barak’s timetable was the deadline he set for Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon: July 7th of this year. For many Israelis, Lebanon seems to have become a kind of small-scale Vietnam—an invasion made for the wrong reasons, and a quagmire from which they cannot escape. The plan was carried out, in 1982, by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, whose aim was, among other things, to drive the P.L.O. out of Lebanon, neutralize Syria, and (with the P.L.O. routed) force the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to forgo their struggle for independence and accept Israeli rule. On every count, it failed. (The P.L.O. leadership did leave Lebanon for Tunis, but that worked to its advantage.) Still, the situation came to have a life of its own. Barak told me, “I invested a lot of thought in Lebanon, starting years ago. I was already a ranking general when we entered Lebanon in ’82. I fought against the Syrians there. Fifteen years ago”—three years after Israeli forces entered Lebanon—“Menachem Begin announced it to be a tragedy. At a certain point, he said, ‘I cannot stand it anymore—the consequences of this tragedy.’ This is the reason he left office.”

Withdrawing from Lebanon has always been seen as inextricably bound up with a Syrian peace agreement; in return for regaining the Golan, Syria would rein in Hezbollah, and thus insure that Israel’s northern border with Lebanon remained quiet. This linkage, of course, gave Assad a strong card to play. Israel was, in a sense, held hostage to sending its soldiers to a nine-mile buffer zone in southern Lebanon, and its only way out was to reach a deal on Assad’s terms.

Barak came to a different conclusion. “When Begin called it a ‘tragedy,’ we had six hundred graves of young soldiers,” he said. “Since then, another five hundred—so what happens that you cannot detach yourself from such a combination? And my judgment was that somehow there is an inertia in the behavior of nations—even in regard to such sensitive issues that you pay for with life.” As Barak sees it, the combat in Lebanon is cyclical; for a time, the Hezbollah guerrillas gain the upper hand, inflicting Israeli casualties, and then, for a time, the I.D.F. gains the upper hand. “In quiet periods, Israeli leaders tend to think, We’re winning, so why withdraw? If you decide to make a change, and something happens, *you* are responsible personally!” And in periods when Israeli soldiers are being killed, Barak said, “there is a genuine instinct not to surrender under pressure. We are a fighting people! It is almost immoral to raise questions when we are fighting under pressure.” So Barak decided that by announcing a date for withdrawal he would “cut this Gordian knot.”

Such a decision, of course, does nothing to mitigate the risk entailed in withdrawing without Syria’s agreeing to act as peace enforcer. But, Barak reasoned, if Israeli soldiers had to fight against attacks made on Israel after it had withdrawn from Lebanon, they would not be plagued by the kinds of doubts that some of the soldiers in Lebanon have been expressing lately (and quite openly, in a way that is extraordinary for Israeli soldiers). Speaking of Israel’s history, Barak said, “In the first twenty-five years, we had a strong sense that the Arab world wants to destroy us, we are fighting for our very existence. It gave us a lot of strength. But when we went into Lebanon questions began to appear. People asked themselves, ‘What the hell are we doing here?’ Youngsters, especially those who risk their life, read very easily, intuitively, whether the cause for which they are risking their life is real or artificial—whether it really has to do with the survival of Israel or has to do with political aspirations."

This logic led to Barak's decision to make a commitment to withdraw. But in so doing he fundamentally upset Assad's endgame. Barak was threatening not only to deprive Assad of his high card but also to remove his justification for remaining in Lebanon. With Israel gone, and without an agreement (between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon) that accepted Syria's presence, for a period of time, as a stabilizing force, Assad would be the sole occupier. And by setting the deadline for July Barak had created a time frame in which a deal would have to be reached quickly. Barak was engaging in brinksmanship crafted specifically for this adversary—who, as Barak commented to me, "usually doesn't move until the circumstances impose it upon him."

But Barak made warmer overtures as well. A friend of his, Lord Levy, a wealthy British music-company executive who is close to Tony Blair, made several trips to Damascus, carrying messages from Barak. Patrick Seale, a British journalist who has written a flattering biography of Assad, came to Tel Aviv to interview Barak, and then travelled to see Assad. In interviews by Seale published in late June, Assad and Barak exchanged bouquets of compliments that were unprecedented between an Israeli and a Syrian leader. Assad described Barak as a "strong and honest man" who "wants to achieve peace with Syria. He is moving forward at a well-studied pace." Barak was even gushier. He told Seale, "There is no doubt that President Assad has shaped the Syrian nation. His legacy is a strong, independent, self-confident Syria." In September, Barak described Assad as "a man of his word, a man of honor, of dignity." Israelis were flabbergasted at their new Prime Minister, with his reputation for straight talk—had he forgotten about Assad's massacre at Hama? Could he possibly be describing the same Syria, economically weak and backward, desperate for the "peace bonuses" in foreign aid which a deal could bring? But Barak was not playing to his home audience. "Ehud's approach to the peace is a very cold analysis of the other party and what are the buttons to be pushed to get him to move," a friend of Barak's told me. "He analyzed the man. He decided this is what he would respond to. He inserted the cassette."

Offscreen, Barak was preparing for his Syrian mission with the well-honed instincts of a former chief of intelligence, collecting as much secret data as he could. One source was the American businessman Ronald Lauder, who had been a close friend and strong backer of Netanyahu. Lauder had been a secret emissary from Netanyahu to Assad, with whom he had had many long meetings in Damascus; but the content of those meetings had never become public. According to an associate of Barak's, Lauder came to Israel last summer for a series of clandestine meetings with Barak, held not in Barak's home but in that of a friend, after dark, and Lauder and Barak were whisked in and out separately. Lauder is said to have undergone exhaustive debriefings by Barak, and to have shared with him all the notes and documents that grew out of his meetings with Assad.

Among the papers Lauder showed Barak was a non-binding document that had been drawn up between Israel and Syria in September of 1998, and which he had facilitated. This document stated that Israel would withdraw from Syrian land taken in 1967 to commonly agreed-on borders based on the line of June 4, 1967. This was political gold for Barak; in the battle to come, it would provide him with cover from the right—if the Likud's Netanyahu had already agreed to the June 4, 1967, border, he, Barak, could do no less. (Netanyahu has denied that he agreed to it.) Once Barak knew of this document, his associate said, "some people were impatient for him to move, but he was absorbing the information with great patience, before he would do anything." He added that Barak had other secret meetings during this time, with Patrick Seale: "I came to Barak's home and there were Syrian cakes. It was all done in complete secrecy, and that was so important for Assad—that nothing would leak out, that he could trust Barak that way. . . . Ehud was amassing all the information—and he created the atmosphere as only a pianist could."

On December 8, 1999, after Assad had indicated that he was ready to go forward, Clinton announced that the Syrian-Israeli peace talks were about to resume, at the point where they had left off three years earlier. To the Palestinians, these developments were utterly dispiriting. Although Barak, for his part, insisted that he was going to carry on negotiations on the two tracks simultaneously, and that they would be independent of each other, it was the Syrian track that held the world rapt; all of Israel's energy seemed to be focussed

"We'd love to come, but we can't seem to find a sitter."

there, and the Palestinians could see clearly that they were meant to come in last, and knew just how "problematic," as Yatom had put it, that was likely to be. That they were being preëmpted by Assad—who had tried to crush the P.L.O. in Lebanon in the seventies and, more recently, had advertised his contempt for Arafat, deeming the Oslo deal so paltry that it made Arafat little more than an Israeli collaborator—made the moment only more bitter. "Barak swears to God he is not playing off one against the other," an official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry told me in early January. "But of course he is." If Assad were to be intransigent on some issue, it would not hurt to have Arafat there, ready to upstage him, as he had done with Oslo in 1993.

Barak seemed to be treating Arafat as a supporting player. He did not meet with him for seven weeks after winning the election. Then, in early September, he reached an agreement with Arafat to delay for several months Israel's commitment, made by the Netanyahu government, to turn over more West Bank territory, and to adopt a Barak innovation—a "framework" peace agreement on general principles on all the hard issues, with the details to be worked out later. The framework agreement would supersede the final Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, thus mitigating what Barak had always seen as Oslo's primary flaw. While the principles of the hardest issues were being negotiated, Israel would still control essentially sixty per cent of the West Bank. Barak succeeded in establishing a deadline of February 13, 2000, for the framework agreement; the final, fully detailed agreement was to follow by mid-September.

He had won a delay in a handover, improved his bargaining position, and imposed a deadline; but even with the deadline there seemed to be little sense of urgency on the Palestinian track. It took him almost four months from the time he assumed office to appoint someone to head the Israeli team in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He finally settled on Oded Eran, Israel's ambassador to Jordan, a well-regarded career foreign-service officer who had taken part in Oslo's economic talks.

"I've negotiated with Oded in Paris, in Tabeh, I know him well," Abu Ala, the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who was one of the chief negotiators at Oslo and will be intimately involved in final-status negotiations, told me. "He wants to reach an agreement. But I do not see that he is authorized." All through the fall, Abu Ala felt that Barak wanted to "keep the process but not to touch the substance." Then, when the Syrian talks were announced, in December, the sluggishness on the Palestinian track seemed to make sense—*that* was what Barak had been waiting for. At least in theory, Barak could leverage the parties against each other, with the Palestinians staring at a February 13th deadline, and with Assad knowing that they were. Whether a deal could be reached with the Palestinians or not was unclear, because the issues were so complicated, and the gaps between the two sides (especially on Jerusalem, and on the percentage of the West Bank that the Palestinians would ultimately receive) were so wide; whether Barak really could bring two agreements before the Israeli public at once was also uncertain. But to Barak, one of his advisers told me, this much was plain: having a deal with Assad would increase his leverage with Arafat.

In the event, of course, nothing went according to plan. The Syrian talks, which opened in mid-December with high hopes of a speedy, dramatic resolution, faltered. Although Assad dropped his earlier insistence on receiving an Israeli commitment to withdraw to the June 4, 1967, line before talks resumed, he made it clear, an American official told me, that he "expected substance in return" for his procedural gesture—that is, he expected Barak to say something concrete about borders shortly after the talks commenced. Farouk al-Shaara, Barak's counterpart at the talks, did not hear what he wanted to hear when they met in December, or when they reconvened, in early January, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. A State Department official involved in the Shepherdstown talks said that the Americans expected Barak to offer more—agree, say, to withdraw to the June 4, 1967, line if Assad satisfied such-and-such requirements—but Barak would not budge. "We said, 'Sure, Ehud, you can take this approach. And you know what that will get you? Nothing!' " this person recalled.

When I asked Barak why he had been unwilling to offer a conditional commitment, he replied, "This is making a kind of conditional but direct political commitment to Syria, and I would not like to cross this line before we get a better understanding of where we end. For us to accept in a direct political commitment to Syria the concept of what they call the June 4th line, we play the only card we have."

For Assad, however, the supreme insult came after the conclusion of the second round, with the leaking of a draft document, published on January 13th in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, and reported the next day in the Washington *Post*, with the headline "SYRIA OFFERS ISRAEL MAJOR CONCESSIONS." The document showed that, while Israel had still made no concession on the all-important border question, Syria had agreed to an early-warning station manned by U.S. and French military observers on the Golan Heights, and also to elements of a surprisingly warm peace—open borders, full diplomatic relations, and arrangements on trade, tourism, and transportation. "The Palestinians, the Jordanians, the Egyptians were all laughing," an American official said. "This was Assad, who scorned *them* for their bad deals!"

Assad broke off the talks, and Barak was left with the Palestinians, his second choice. The deadline of February 13th was imminent, but he was clearly not ready to try for a framework agreement with them. A couple of weeks after Assad suspended his talks, Arafat followed suit; Barak had offended him by refusing to turn over several villages near Jerusalem (thereby, according to Arafat, breaking an implicit promise), and by his peremptory way of dealing with him. So instead of having the two tracks to play off each other Barak had none.

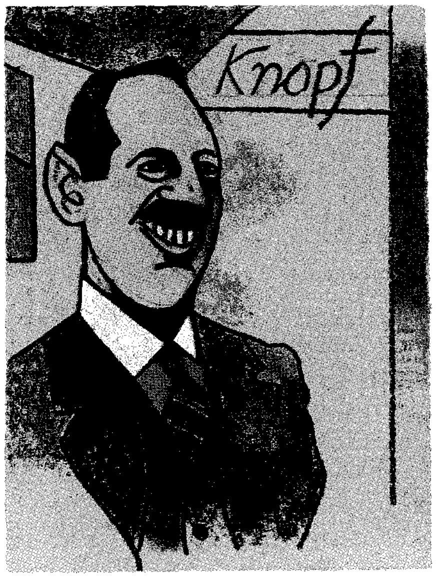
February 13th came and went. Palestinian despair about the peace process had so intensified that Israeli security services warned of a renewed *intifada*. Ultimately, Dennis Ross, the State Department's chief Middle East negotiator, managed to patch up the breach between Barak and Arafat; Barak paid a price, giving Arafat a choice among certain West Bank areas to be handed over by Israel, and the talks resumed—now with a May deadline for the framework agreement.

But the Palestinians knew that Barak was still waiting for Assad. In early March, when I visited Abu Ala, in Ramallah, at the Palestinian Legislative Council building—a ramshackle structure with nervous-looking guards, where the door to Abu Ala's suite, on the third floor, is kept locked from the inside—he said, "I know Barak wants a deal with the Syrians. I understand. He's a military man. He's thinking they have tanks, they have missiles. But it's a mistake, because *we are on the land.* We are the cancer in their stomach. We should learn how to live together." It was a familiar speech; Abu Ala had been delivering it since his first secret meetings with his Israeli counterpart, Uri Savir, in Oslo. That made it no less true, but seven years have passed, and the words sounded tired; the flush of a historic achievement by the Israelis and Palestinians is long gone. Moreover, before becoming Prime Minister Barak had remained aloof from this track and its players; unlike many of his ministers, who by now have developed close relationships with their former enemies, Barak has none. Asked what he thought of Barak, Abu Ala replied, "I like him. He's courageous. He's serious. But he has a different perspective. He may think that the more pressure he puts on the Palestinians the more concessions we will make. But it is very dangerous.

"I am afraid that we, who are supporting the peace process, will be in a corner," Abu Ala went on. "I'm afraid we will lose control. Arafat is not in a good position. The frustration level is very high. We are not dealing with buildings, with trees—we are dealing with people."

Pessimism is deeply ingrained in the Israeli psyche, but when Barak beat Netanyahu last May there seemed to be a collective suspension of disbelief in the prospects for peace. Barak is said to have been *jumping* on Election Night when he realized that he'd won, and a great many Israelis, in their hearts, leaped with him. That made their disappointment even deeper as the peace track stalled. At the same time, Barak had still not focussed on pressing domestic problems. His failings and errors were put under a national microscope, and his image, as someone who could achieve the near-

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

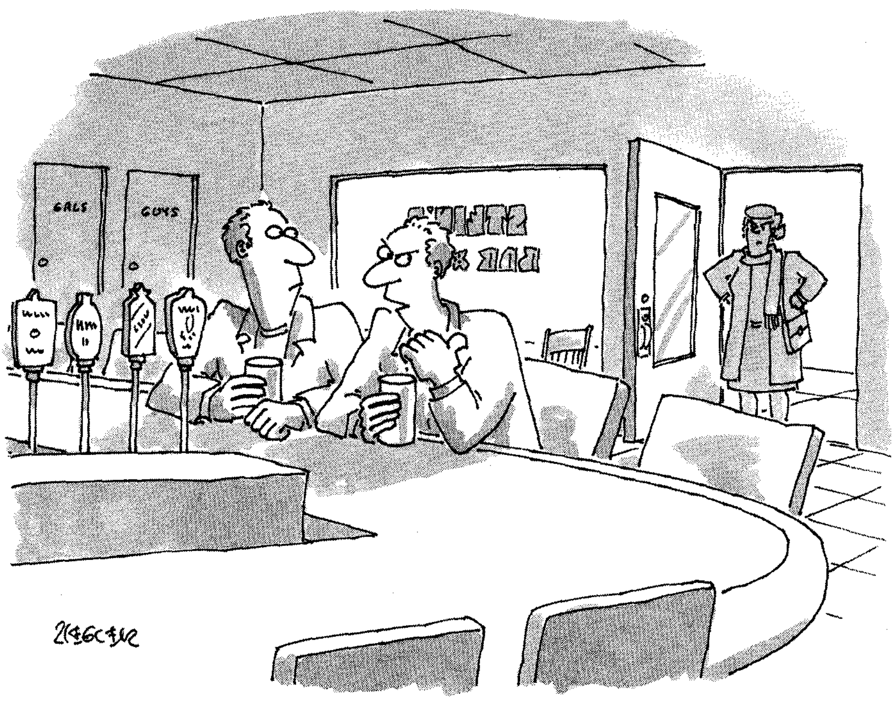
A picture of a borzoi has always appeared on the title page and jacket of every Knopf book, in every Knopf colophon, on nearly all Knopf office stationery, and in practically all Knopf advertising. A carved wooden borzoi, three feet long, is nailed to the wall of the company's reception room. Mrs. Knopf, who has been associated with her husband's business since the start, was crazy about borzois in 1915, or thought she was, and suggested that they use a drawing of one as a trademark. "I bought a couple of them later," she says, "and grew to despise them. They were cowardly, stupid, disloyal, and full of self-pity, and they kept running away. One died, and I gave the other to a kennel. I wish I'd picked a better dog for our imprint." Her disposition of her second pet may have been hastened by a weekend Hergesheimer spent with the Knopfs in the country. Knopf had published his "The Three Black Pennys" and "Java Head." He was the firm's best-selling author. After being kept awake most of the night by the moans and whimpers of the surviving borzoi, Hergesheimer came down to Sunday breakfast wearing a rather drawn look. "I bet Charles Scribner has no such goddam dog," he said. The Knopfs exchanged glances, and Mrs. Knopf went in for Yorkshire terriers.

— *Geoffrey T. Hellman*
"Publisher" (Profiles), November 20, 1948

impossible, was tarnished. When it was announced, in late January, that there was to be a police investigation of his campaign financing—the campaign was accused of accepting funds from illegal sources, funnelled through a host of non-profit organizations—even his ministers didn't voice public support for him. He had alienated many who could have been his allies. One close observer of the rough arena that is Israeli politics commented, "The knives are out, from Barak's own side." When Peres, who is Minister of Regional Development, and wasn't consulted about Barak's timetable with the Palestinians, was asked on Israeli radio about the fact that the February 13th deadline with them was about to be missed, he responded, "I wasn't there for the takeoff, why should I be there for the crash landing?"

Barak's insistence on going it alone may have substantive limitations as well. An American official pointed out that in early February, when Hezbollah was inflicting Israeli casualties almost daily and Barak—who, like Rabin, has kept the portfolio of Defense Minister for himself—was determining Israel's response, he was closeted in I.D.F. headquarters. It was an extremely delicate moment; if Israel responded too strongly, hopes for reaching a peace agreement with Syria would have been dashed. "No one heard from him for a week," the official told me. "He was picking the targets, down to the smallest detail, to do it in such a way that no civilians would be killed. But in that week he never came out and expressed clearly what the policy was." The official went on, "And the Arab world believed Israel was preparing to do worse and worse. Because he's very much focussed on the details, the operational side of things—and not on how to explain to the media what he's doing. You can't do that in today's world."

Ever since Assad broke off the talks in mid-January, Barak had been working with the Americans to prepare for a Clinton-Assad summit. It finally occurred, in Geneva, on March 26th. The Americans were confident, and Barak (despite some public disclaimers about "fifty-fifty chances") seemed to be, too. He had in effect agreed to allow Clinton to "play the only card" Israel had—that is, to make a proposal to Assad regarding the border, while also making it contingent on Assad's satisfying Israel's security and water needs and on the normalization of relations. The border was, indeed, to be based on the June 4, 1967, line—with certain modifications. Israel was proposing that the negotiators come to an agreement on where the line would be, and that Assad could then claim, essentially, that he had got what he always insisted upon. According to three people close to the negotiations, al-Shaara and his colleagues had indicated, at Blair House and also in Shepherdstown, that they understood Israel's dependence on water from the Sea of Galilee and would not object to a narrow strip of Israeli sovereignty at the shoreline. The debate, presumably, would be over the width of the strip.



"Uh-oh. The so-called marriage penalty."

When President Clinton presented this proposition to Assad in Geneva, Assad simply said no. Clinton, taken aback, is said to have turned to al-Shaara and pointed out that he had been receptive to this idea earlier. Assad then demanded of al-Shaara, "You said that?" Assad made it plain to Clinton that the Syrian position was inflexible. He mentioned in passing that before 1967 he had gone swimming in the Sea of Galilee—if the Israelis wanted peace, he would again.

Though the meeting continued for four hours—including a tête-à-tête between Clinton and Assad—nothing was accomplished.

Since that summit, Barak's poll ratings have dropped even more precipitately. Now, with only about forty-two per cent of the Israeli public viewing him favorably, he is on a par with Netanyahu—under whose leadership Israel's economy stagnated, its peace negotiations stalled, its relations with the Arabs deteriorated dramatically, and its image in the eyes of the world suffered. The Israelis, seeing their hopes for a Syrian peace and its dividends crushed, appear to have lost patience with their Prime Minister and his nine-month obsession. Americans who worked on the Geneva summit seem to be infected with the general Israeli malaise, except that their anger has been directed at Assad. And now Barak's commitment to withdraw from Lebanon unilaterally in July has begun to stir grave concern. One American diplomat said, "The irony is, Barak could be going from trying to make peace with Syria to being at war with Syria." That might be "a little too dramatic," he added, for while Assad seems not to want peace, it is hard to believe that he wants war.

The only person in this sea of angst whose spirits seem undimmed is Barak. "Hallo! Hallo!" he boomed cheerfully over the line, when I called him a few days ago. Despite his intensive efforts to analyze Assad, he now acknowledged that he was at a loss to explain what had happened. "I don't pretend to be able to penetrate the soul of an ailing dictator, sitting there, from the mountains of northern Syria, shaping his own nation. It is clear to me there is a need for a 'peace of the brave' between Israel and Syria, but if there is no will there is no way. We cannot impose it upon him."

This is the Middle East, and interpretations of Assad's actions are suitably byzantine. Barak said, "Some Arab leaders are telling me that maybe it's a kind of sophisticated brinksmanship, beyond our reach." According to this interpretation, Assad cares more about maintaining his control of Lebanon than he does about peace with Israel or regaining the Golan; so he might have made a tactical move in Geneva, to test whether Barak would back down on his commitment to withdraw. If Israel were to remain in Lebanon, Assad would be able to continue to exercise his effective sovereignty there unchallenged. But now that Barak has declared his resolution to withdraw unilaterally, this theory goes, Assad may come forward after all—because in the context of an agreement he would plainly be allowed to stay in Lebanon (though not indefinitely) as a stabilizing influence. (And then there was Yasir Arafat's immediate reaction, which was that Geneva was merely a charade—that an Israeli-Syrian deal had already been reached and would be announced this month.)

"We highly appreciate Clinton," Barak continued. In the talks, Barak dealt with al-Shaara and others, who were all capable people but were civil servants; the decision-maker was Assad. "So we could not know to what extent he might become flexible, and Clinton took it upon himself to clarify it. He took a direct approach to the question, in one step unveiling the mask of Assad." The door will remain open for a short time, Barak continued, but he is doubtful about reaching an agreement. Perhaps Assad's reluctance has to do with internal politics, and his concerns about his son's succession. In any event, Barak continued, "There is a dynamic to it. Once he said to his public that he swam in this lake. . . . I told Clinton, we are lucky that he didn't swim in the Geneva lake! Or the Ontario lake, for that matter!"

The doomsday scenario that the American diplomat had voiced about unilateral withdrawal—one that many in the I.D.F. offer as well—goes like this: Israeli troops will withdraw; Syria-sponsored forces, such as Hezbollah or rogue Palestinians not affiliated with the P.L.O., will fire into Israel; Israel will hit back, hard, at Syrian targets; and a major conflagration will occur. When Hezbollah was inflicting casualties on Israeli troops earlier this year, Barak resisted pressures from the I.D.F. and others to retaliate with force, and on Syrian targets. Some Israelis in the northern border towns had ridiculed his temperate stance, saying that they were spending days in bomb shelters for a peace process that didn't exist. (Syrian talks had broken off.) But Barak had drawn up plans for a three-stage response; the second and third stages were to be carried out only if Hezbollah fired into Israel, and they were said to be extremely harsh. Hezbollah did not attack. In January, of course, Barak was protecting the Syrian peace process. Now he will have no such compunction.

When I commented to Barak that his plans for a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon were considered quite dangerous, he responded, "I am not afraid! We have to do it! You know, we are pulling *out* of Lebanon, we are not invading Lebanon. You know, don't spread the word, but Lebanon is a member of the U.N.!" He was referring to longstanding Security Council resolutions that call for immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and state that after Israel withdraws the U.N. will make security arrangements to help Lebanon establish sovereignty over its southern area. Once Israel complied with these resolutions, Syria's hegemony would be called into question.

Barak said he is convinced that he is doing the "right thing—namely, to disconnect ourselves from this tragedy in Lebanon and defend ourselves from our border." He does not deny, however, the risk of violence, and even war. "No, we are not afraid of peace, and may I tell you secretly that we are not afraid of war! And we don't accept the idea that the only way for us to secure Israel is to have a stronghold in a neighboring country. But we expect the world to support this policy."

Barak has shifted his sights to the next historic target—the withdrawal. He cannot afford to be indifferent to his sorry approval ratings, but the political noise that surrounds him seems mainly static. He told me once, "I respect the judgment of our people, but the role of leaders is to lead. You should have an inner compass, rather than judging the mood, or the headlines of the newspapers." Famous for his imperturbability, it seems he is imperturbable on principle as well as by nature. He surely knows that many of his own ministers are waiting for his downfall, that the people will not lie on a fence for him, that even friends say they admire him more than they love him. But if such things cause him the slightest distress he shows no sign of it. Barak cares about the judgment of history, and it is history's players who, as he speaks about them, sound like his true companions.

No one seems nearer at hand than Ben-Gurion, who, Barak says admiringly, was a "totally internally independent man." The last time we met, in late February, before the collapse of the Syrian talks, Barak told me how, in 1948, Ben-Gurion had obtained a difficult decision from the government-in-embryo involving the creation of the State of Israel: "He passed it by the edge of one vote!" In February, Barak seemed focussed on the inevitable battle within his fraying coalition, whose votes for a Syrian deal he would be hard-pressed to garner. Last week, though, fixed on the impending withdrawal from Lebanon (and the role of the U.N.), he volunteered this about Ben-Gurion: "You know, he accepted the U.N. plan for a division of Palestine, between two states, Israeli and Arab. And the moment he agreed to it all the neighboring Arab countries attacked Israel. As a result, we became the Israel of '67." He meant that Israel's borders were set during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and remained thus for nearly twenty years. It was, he said, the price the Arabs paid for not accepting the U.N. decision. "But Ben-Gurion agreed to it. He knew quite probably that he might enter a war, but it would be a war imposed upon us by our neighbors. We'd have to fight, but we'd fight out of no choice. That is the way you really muster all the energies of your own people." ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE MUSEUM GAME

The Guggenheim wants to re-create Bilbao on Wall Street.

BY MARTIN FILLER

Picture this: A huge, biomorphic structure clad in silvery metal—a cousin to Frank Gehry's magnificent Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain—juts into the East River near the tip of Manhattan. It sits on eighty-foot-high columns, a hundred yards north of Pier 11, anchorage for the Wall Street ferry and the Floating Hospital. If you look west, down the canyon of Wall Street, you can see the Gothic spire of Trinity Church, which has pointed heavenward amid Mammon since the days of Melville's Bartleby. The building stretches for five hundred feet along the river, like a clipper ship with full sails billowing in a brisk harbor breeze. Because of the reflective materials that cover it, and its undulating contours, it is transformed as the light and the weather change, taking on an almost unbearably dazzling refulgence when the sun comes up over the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, which is directly across from it. At dusk, it looks as if it were plated in pewter. The building lifts the spirits, as do its noblest neighbors—the Brooklyn Bridge and the Woolworth Building.

Right now, of course, there is no such structure. Where it would stand, if the ambitions of Thomas Krens, the director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, were to be realized, there are two rather shabby piers covered with inflatable bubble shells. The piers are leased to the New York Health and Racquet Club and used as tennis courts. It is hard to imagine why anyone would object to their being replaced by what Krens has proposed, a museum designed by Frank Gehry, the architect who gave Bilbao, a postindustrial Basque backwater, one of the most critically admired and popular buildings of the twentieth century. But there are already rumblings of discontent from neighboring residents, and the plans for the new museum haven't even been formally announced yet. (That will happen on April 18th, at a reception and dinner in honor of Gehry at the Guggenheim on Fifth Avenue.) Someone close to the museum reports that when Krens showed Gehry's model to the real-estate developer Joseph Rose, a prospective patron of the project, he was taken aback. "You can't do that, Tom," he said. "It would change the picture postcard of Manhattan." The city's Economic Development Corporation, which requested proposals for the site, has been considering various other possibilities, including an aquarium, a cruise-ship dock, a floating hotel, and a theatre.

Even the architect—admittedly, something of a worrywart—is cautious about the prospects of his museum getting built. "This is not a final design or anything," Gehry said to me a few days ago. "There was not enough money to do a lot of work. But I love Tom and try to help him with his Don Quixote visions, which by some miracle in Bilbao he was able to pull off. We've done quite a beautiful model, and we've tried to make it real, even though it's at an early, early stage. I wouldn't build it right now, but there are some good ideas." The chairman of the Guggenheim board, the auto-insurance magnate Peter B. Lewis, shares Gehry's tentativeness. "My view is that this is a quixotic effort," he says. "We all think it's a spectacular idea for the city of New York. But I despair of thinking that there will be enough power and energy to get it done. I think Frank is reconciled to this, and so am I, but I'm not sure Tom is."

In a letter inviting guests to the dinner for Gehry and the presentation of the model of the new museum, Krens wrote that "the design is so extraordi-

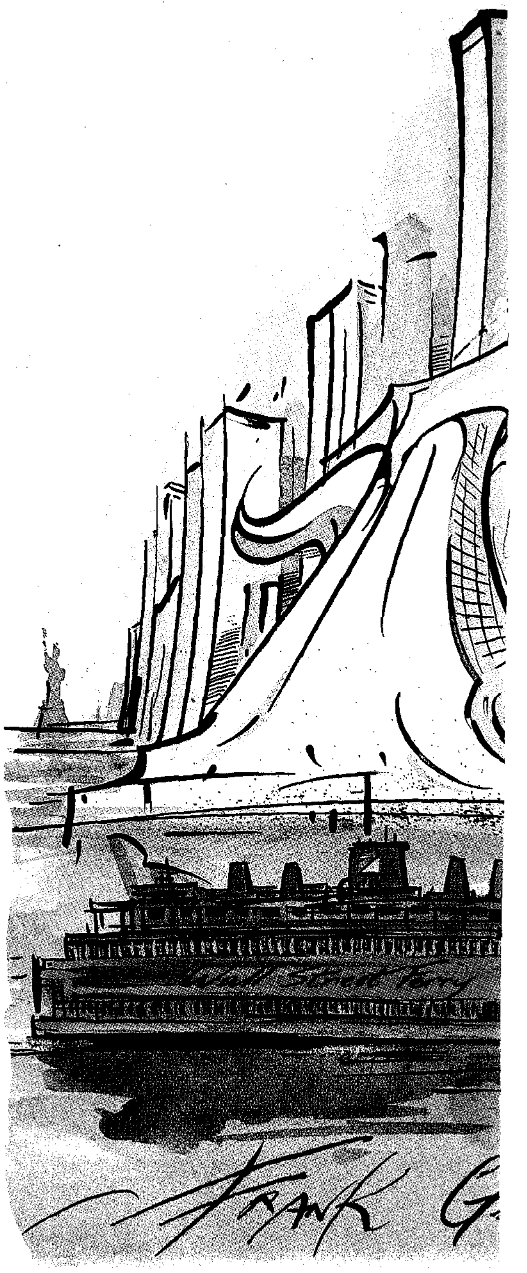
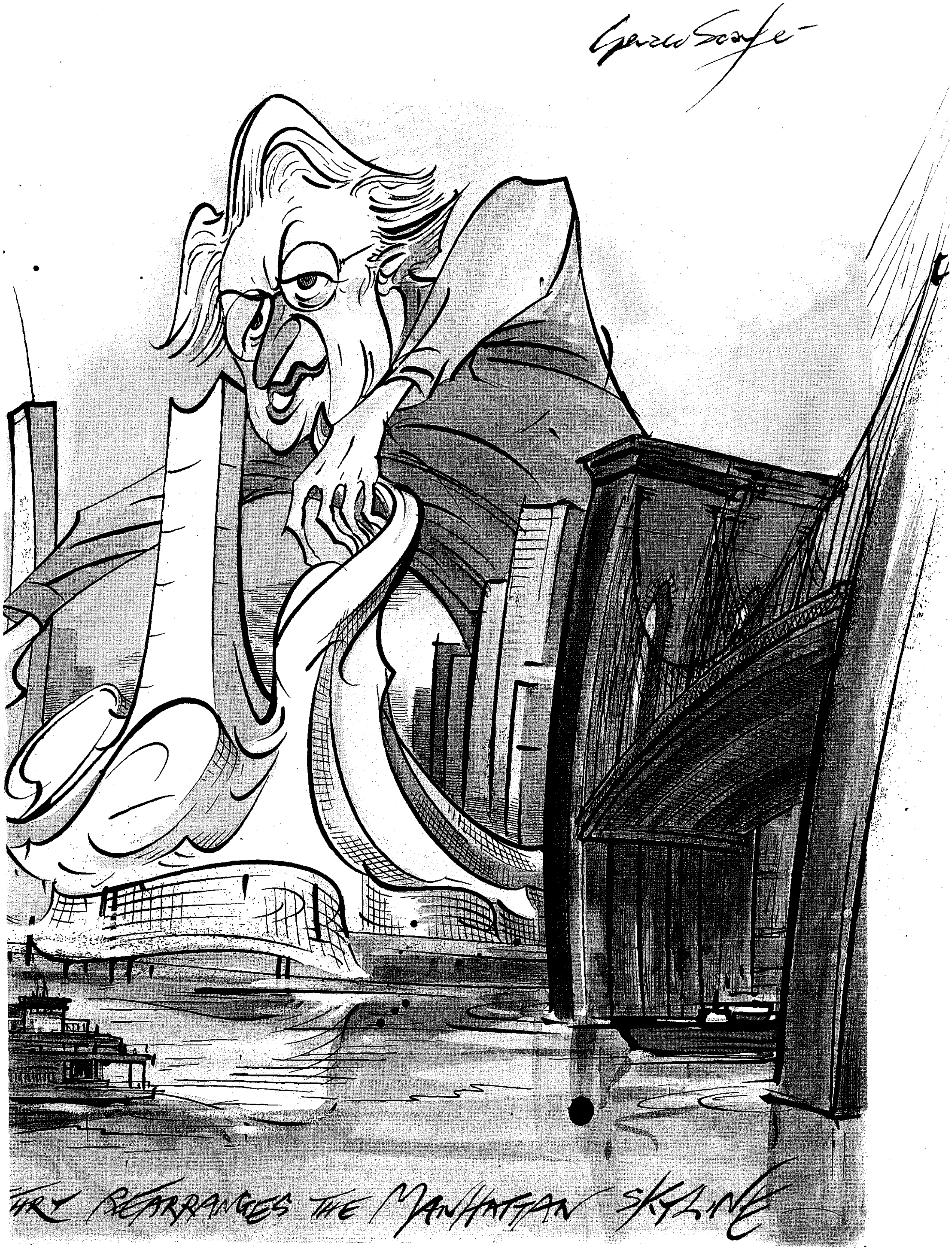


ILLUSTRATION BY GERALD SCARFE

Frank Gehry has made a model for a museum just south of the Brooklyn Bridge.


Gerald Scarfe
HRY REARRANGES THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE

nary, and the issues it raises so compelling for those who care about architecture and art in New York City, that the very presentation of the project is, in and of itself, a unique cultural event of some significance." During the two years of preparation leading up to the official unveiling, Krens's staff referred to what they were working on as the Manhattan Project, after America's secret atom-bomb program during the Second World War. Krens's Manhattan Project is the latest and grandest scheme among many he has hatched since becoming head of the foundation, in 1988. The Guggenheim's holdings now include—besides the Fifth Avenue Guggenheim, Frank Lloyd Wright's final masterwork, completed a few months after his death in 1959—Bilbao, which opened in 1997; a Guggenheim SoHo, at Broadway and Prince Street; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection on the Grand Canal in Venice (a new exhibition space near it, in the Dogana di Mare, across from St. Mark's Square, was recently announced); and the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, on the ground floor of the Deutsche Bank building on Unter den Linden. Last fall, MASS MoCA, a vast display space for contemporary art, opened in a converted industrial complex in North Adams, Massachusetts, with funds provided largely by the state, thirteen years after Krens dreamed up the idea. ("This is part of the Guggenheim," he says, "but I'm not branding it as a Guggenheim museum.") And there may be still more outposts. Last fall, when Krens was in São Paulo, organizing the Guggenheim's forthcoming exhibition of Brazilian art, the provincial governor offered to provide land if the museum would build a branch there.

Ten years ago, not long after Krens became the director of the museum, I asked him how he could expect his many projects—which then included plans for new buildings in Moscow, New York, North Adams, Salzburg, and Venice—to come to fruition. "I've got five balls in the air," he replied, "and if even one of them lands, I'm still ahead of the game." This was a slightly mixed metaphor, but the point was that he needed just one big success, and that success came with Gehry's epochal building in Bilbao, which Krens commissioned and made possible through shrewd negotiations with local politicians. The phenomenon of the Bilbao Guggenheim spiked tourism and brought hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to the Basque region. Krens regularly receives offers from one city or another asking him to replicate the "Bilbao Effect" for them.

The Lower Manhattan branch of the Guggenheim is meant to outshine other flashy museum buildings, like Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, which opened in 1977, and the late-modernist acropolis completed by Richard Meier for the Getty Center in Los Angeles twenty years later. The exterior of the building is, at least according to the current plans, to be clad in titanium or stainless steel, in an exuberant unfurling of the scroll-like forms Gehry perfected at Bilbao. The planning brief calls for a grand entry hall and visitors' center, gallery wings including spaces for architecture exhibitions and performance art, a photography or sculpture gallery, a film department, a library and study center, an arts-education center, an entertainment hall or boardroom, a members' lounge, a commercial theatre, as well as a promenade, a sculpture garden, and an ice-skating rink. The building's scale will allow the installation of huge works impossible to exhibit at the uptown headquarters, such as the thirty-foot-high sculptures by Richard Serra that were shown in Bilbao last year. The structure's highest component is a tower as tall as a forty-story building, centered above the museum's lobby and a skylighted atrium. "Sculpturally, the tower was needed to anchor the thing to the Manhattan skyline and lift it up," Gehry says. "Every time we took it out it looked wrong. The building is higher than Bilbao, which is a hundred and sixty-five feet. That's a big deal for Tom, who wanted Bilbao to be higher than New York, and now it won't be." The tower might be used for offices, housing, or even business entertaining. "Tom's offices would be up there," Gehry says, "and a restaurant, obviously at the top. Tom's idea is that corporate sponsors would be given private galleries, like hospitality suites, but I hate to denigrate it like that." This is another way of explaining what Peter Lewis referred to as "sky boxes," which would provide, in his words, "a very classy way for corporations to do what corporations do, with art and the whole nine yards."

WINE
CAMENBERT
FLAUBERT
CHICKEN
BACON
WATER
MOZZARELLA

Lisa Dennison, the Guggenheim's deputy director and chief curator, says that private sources have already pledged a third of the $850 million that is needed to complete the project—$450 million for the building and $400 million for an endowment. Since the Museum of Modern Art announced just two years ago a campaign to raise $650 million for the biggest expansion in its history, the downtown Guggenheim could be seen as an in-your-face challenge to MOMA's dominance among contemporary art institutions. And, in truth, Yoshio Taniguchi's minimalist infill scheme for MOMA seems tame next to Gehry's explosive Manhattan Project.

Krens faces a much tougher set of circumstances in New York than he did in Bilbao, where his improvisational management style and take-it-or-leave-it attitude worked well. In New York, the complexities of neighborhood, city, and state politics are exacerbated by Krens's need to raise hundreds of millions of dollars at a time when MOMA is also putting the squeeze on donors. It is as hard to get onto the MOMA board of trustees as it is to get past the co-op board at 820 Fifth Avenue, and Krens has cannily welcomed colossally rich, if sometimes unpolished, tycoons who are beyond the pale of the art establishment and are not affiliated with other museums. Peter Lewis, who became a member of the board in 1993, and who has already donated fifty million dollars to the museum, is the most important of them. He was introduced to Krens by Frank Gehry, who spent eight years designing a stupendous house for Lewis in Ohio that was never built, estimates for which reached eighty million dollars before the project was abandoned in 1995. "My best design to date has been bringing Tom and Peter together," Gehry says. "It's a marriage made in Heaven."

Lewis, who is assumed to be the primary private donor to the Manhattan Project, describes himself as "not only a maverick, but a bit of a character. It took me a long time to accept that. It was actually Frank Gehry who said, 'Face it, you're just eccentric.'" Lewis can be disconcertingly casual. I was having breakfast with him a few months ago in his New York pied-à-terre just off Central Park West when I suddenly noticed that he was unscrewing his prosthetic foot. (His leg was amputated below the knee two years ago because of vascular problems.) He hoisted his stump next to the marmalade, explaining, "I'm more comfortable this way."

Lewis is a tall, slim, white-haired man of sixty-six. That morning he was dressed in a black designer T-shirt and loose-cut slacks—the Hollywood stealth-billionaire look. His apartment, which is generic-modern, is hung with unremarkable art—a minor Picasso etching, a gassy late Rosenquist canvas—but it has spectacular views of the Park and the midtown skyline. Lewis is president, chairman, and chief executive officer of Progressive Corp., an insurance firm based in Ohio that was founded by his father. He has chronicled the company in a memoir of sorts titled "Progressive History," which has circulated privately in manuscript. In addition to documenting his firings of executives and his affairs with women employees—practices he heartily endorses—he writes of his desire to "show off my success, symbolize my position, and emphasize my ample supply of testosterone."

Lewis sees Krens as something of an alter ego: "Tom will go to Hong Kong or Warsaw and he always comes back with six different ideas, new patrons, new possibilities, new show ideas. He's able to take the power people, the money people, the civic people and get them all interested in the Guggenheim. He has seventeen tracks going at once and he's putting data into each one. The problem of working with Tom is that by the time you begin to polish a brilliant idea that he's come up with, he's got seven variations, all good. He needs someone like me, because I can help him focus and be a little more sensible about the business side. When I became chairman I said, 'Tom, I want you to understand that the fact that I can get you fired is a very important fact. If you get fired I may leave, but make no mistake about it, if we don't agree on our priorities and get it done, I'm not afraid of firing people.'"

"I got my ticket for three dollars over the Internet. Are you going to eat that salmon?"

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Lewis's observations about the art world are, indeed, somewhat eccentric. "Look at Bellagio," he said, referring to the Las Vegas hotel and casino where Steve Wynn spent a fortune putting together a collection of Old Master, Impressionist, and Modern pictures. "It's a piece of shit. It's disgusting. But people pay twelve dollars a head and line up all day long to go through it. These are people in short pants and fat bellies. But they're paying and it's part of the experience of Las Vegas. And probably more people have gone there than to the Guggenheim."

He is drawn to unorthodox tactics. "I made a living doing things everybody criticized," he said, "and I keep making a living. There are many new ways to finance the Guggenheim that no one has ever thought of that require breaking rules that people think ought not to be broken. I see a museum with two or three billion dollars' worth of pictures and not enough money to pay the bills. The answer is obvious: sell a couple of pictures. People say, 'We can't do that.' Well, all someone's got to tell me is we can't do that, just because some tradition says you can't liquidate a picture or two."

The early years of Krens's regime were clouded by the ethical questions of just such a gambit. Eager to acquire a three-hundred-piece collection of sixties and seventies Minimalist and Conceptual art put together by the Italian collector Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, who wanted $30 million for it, Krens auctioned off three paintings from the Guggenheim's permanent collection in 1990: Kandinsky's "Fugue" (1914), Modigliani's "Boy in a Blue Vest" (1918), and Chagall's "Anniversaire" (1923). Together, the three pictures fetched $47.3 million. The Kandinsky alone sold for $20.9, to the Swiss dealer Ernst Beyeler, who kept it for his private museum outside Basel. The deaccessioning of the Kandinsky, which was widely considered to be one of his greatest canvases, upset scholars and some trustees of the Guggenheim. Their dismay was heightened by the widespread perception that the Panza collection was not worth anywhere near what Krens paid for it. He referred to "Fugue" as a "loaner," and while it is true that the painting was frequently lent out, this was because it was essential to Kandinsky retrospectives and exhibitions on abstraction.

A decade later, Krens is still defending the deal. "We sold three works that our curators concluded were not essential to the fundamental mission of the institution," Krens explained to me. This seemed curious, since the Guggenheim was founded as the Museum of Non-Objective Art, with Kandinsky as its star. "We have more than two hundred Kandinskys, six from this particular year, so we selected a Kandinsky," Krens said. But "Fugue" was hardly dispensable. "It's like the 'Demoiselles d'Avignon,' " the art historian Robert Rosenblum, now a curator at the Guggenheim, said at the time. "How could you sell something like that?"

Peter Lewis wouldn't hesitate to do it again. "O.K., so there's bad publicity, the ha, the ho," he said. "Who cares? Well, everybody cares but me and Tom. It's an absurd rule that I don't see any reason to follow. And there are lots of others. We'll probably test them, and some of them will have been dumb things and some of them will be very smart things. The thing that Tom and I have in common is that we're both change agents. Change scares people half to death. But things are constantly changing, therefore to accept the status quo is an early death. Change is valuable for its own sake, whether or not it turns out to be an improvement."

The Guggenheim's complex affiliations with its branches and their sponsors—based on the frequent movement of the collection's works among them—have created a lucrative profit center for the museum. "Tom gets pissed when I say this, so don't quote me," a close colleague of Krens's said, "but since he can't sell it, he's renting the art. That's what moving it around between all those branches amounts to. And it's brought in a lot of money."

I asked Peter Lewis if Krens would accept money from lenders to exhibitions, as Arnold Lehman, the director of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, did from the collector Charles Saatchi, whose "Sensation" show opened to such controversy in New York last year. "He'd do it in a minute," Lewis snapped. "I asked him his attitude about that and he said here's another absurdity, the hypocrisy that says you've got to govern where you get your funding. Every collector who lends a picture to a show has a financial

Thomas Krens, the director of the Guggenheim, changed the way museums do business. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

interest in it. It's like campaign finance. Say what's going on and let people judge. Where do you draw the line? Forget the line!"

Tom Krens is often described, by his critics at any rate, as a technocrat and a pitchman. He is fond of saying that the museum is an eighteenth-century concept housed in a nineteenth-century building with a twentieth-century program, and that it all has to be rethought for the twenty-first century. But his solutions to this problem can be troubling. "My real concern about Tom's vision is that I don't believe that buildings make institutions," Kathy Halbreich, the director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, says. "I'm still old-fashioned enough to believe that what inhabits those buildings is ultimately the draw." At the Guggenheim, Lisa Dennison demurs. "It's the 'build it and they will come' phenomenon," she says. "And it's not just the public. Build it and the collections will come, the artists will come, the programming will come, the money will come."

It is possible to argue that Krens inherited an institution that was already more distinguished for its building than its collection. Since the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937, it has amassed an idiosyncratic array of art. It owns several distinguished paintings: a great Cézanne portrait ("Man with Folded Arms"), a monumental Pissarro landscape, some good early Chagalls, an important Bonnard. But the collection has relatively few crucial works and is not consistently strong in the way that, say, the collection of the Museum of Modern Art is. Krens has added Minimal and Conceptual pieces, and work by some of his favorite artists, such as Joseph Beuys. In 1993 he established a permanent photography collection. The basis for that was a gift of several million dollars from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, along with more than two hundred photographs and other works by Mapplethorpe. The museum's permanent exhibition space for photographs is called the Robert Mapplethorpe Gallery.

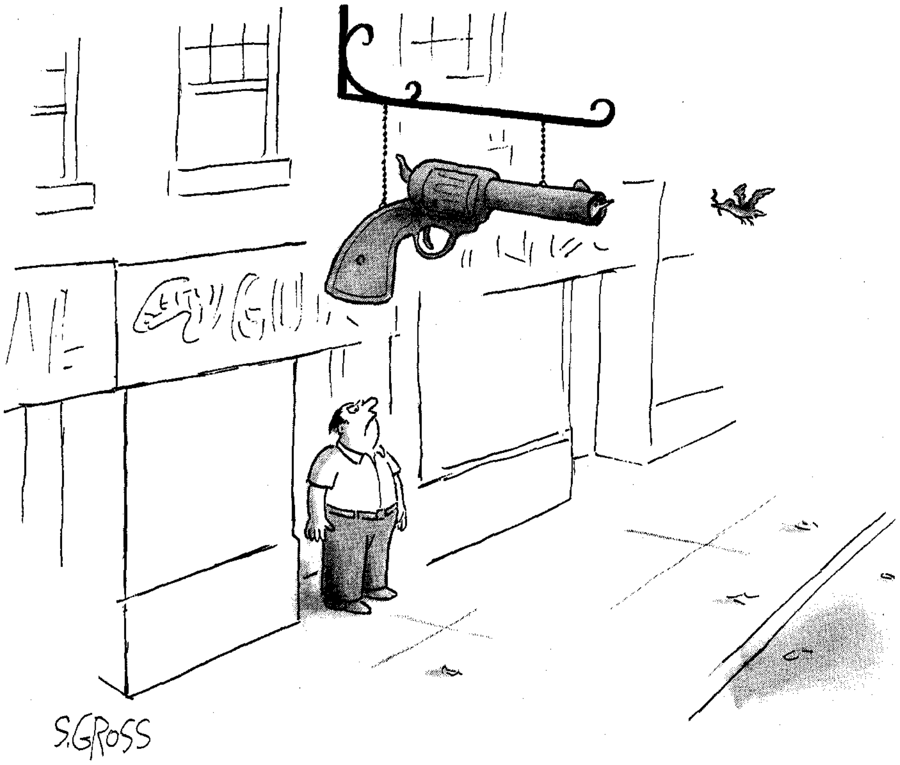
The Guggenheim's exhibition history during the Krens era has been hit-or-miss, ranging from the ill-digested "Refigured Painting: The New German Image, 1960-1988" in 1989 to the widely praised sculpture show "Picasso and the Age of Iron," in 1993. Curators at the museum have complained about having difficulty getting Krens to focus on their proposals. One of them, Mark Rosenthal, tried for a long time to get Krens to approve a major Giacometti exhibition, which would have been the first comprehensive tribute to the artist in New York since the Guggenheim's Giacometti show in 1968. Early this year, after word got out that MOMA is putting on a Giacometti retrospective in 2001, Rosenthal took a job at Christie's.

The most popular exhibition during Krens's tenure at the Guggenheim, "The Art of the Motorcycle," in 1998, was one of its most controversial, and also his favorite. Though it drew an unprecedented three hundred thousand visitors, it was treated with contempt by several art critics (in spite of the fact that the Museum of Modern Art has displayed a sports car in its design collection for years and last summer held an exhibition of energy-conserving autos). "I knew that I was witnessing a dark day in the history of American museums," Jed Perl wrote in *The New Republic* after attending the press preview of the exhibition, which Krens entered on a huge BMW bike (the one he rides to work and parks outside the Guggenheim offices). "What you have here," Perl went on, "is an exhibit that's tailor-made to delight the Wall Street Masters of the Universe who helped Krens transform the Guggenheim into an international entertainment consortium. . . . The Guggenheim Museum has been lobotomized."

In Krens's defense, one could point out that Frank Gehry provided an astonishing installation for the show, lining the concrete spiral of Wright's rotunda with mirrored stainless-steel panels to play off the chrome-plated Harleys. And the catalogue, which was surprisingly scholarly, is now a standard text on the subject. (When the show opened in Spain last November, Krens gave in to his bad-boy aspirations again and led a cavalcade of BMWs through Bilbao and into the Gehry building, along with members of the Guggenheim Motorcycle Club, a celebrity gang that includes Barry Diller, Laurence Fishburne, Dennis Hopper, Lauren Hutton, Jeremy Irons, Lyle Lovett, and Diane Sawyer.)

Even Krens's admirers admit that showmanship and political savvy are his strengths. In the mid-eighties, after teaching art at Williams College for twelve years, and shortly before becoming director of the Guggenheim, he went to the Yale School of Management, where he earned a master's degree in public and private management. One of his teachers was Martin Shubik, the Seymour H. Knox Professor of Mathematical Institutional Economics and the author of "Game Theory in the Social Sciences." Shubik has taught many men who have gone on to become heads of corporations and powerful figures in a variety of fields, but Krens stands out in his mind. "Within a couple of weeks, I could see that he was a truly major-league operator—in the good sense," Shubik says. "Without exaggeration, I can say that Tom has the mantle of P. T. Barnum on his shoulders, and I regard Barnum as a very serious fellow. Tom is probably the greatest seducer in the business."

Krens is an imposing figure. For one thing, he is extremely tall. At six feet five, he towers over almost everyone. The first time I visited him in his office on Fifth Avenue, a few months ago, he was wearing an uptown-proper/downtown-hip crossover outfit of charcoal-gray shirt and almost-black tie. He steered me to a chair on one side of a black granite-topped, aircraft-carrier-size conference table set at a thrusting diagonal against the floor-to-ceiling grid of small square windows. The room's fifteen-foot ceilings seemed in correct proportion to Krens's height. His round, wire-rim-bespectacled, lightly bearded, and almost expressionless face was framed by two images on the wall behind him that reflected what I'd been told were his greatest passions: his eight-year-old son and the new Gehry building. There was a drawing by young Nicholas Krens, of a huge bouquet of flowers, and near it a grainy black-and-white photograph of Gehry's model for the Manhattan Project. Krens was not particularly forthcoming about either subject, but then he is a notoriously opaque man. "So, you're still committed to doing this piece?" he asked me, like a harried patient about



to undergo a minor but annoying medical procedure. When I assured him that I was, he opened a plastic container of granola and milk and said, "You wouldn't mind if I had a little breakfast?" He warmed up slightly when I told him that I'd spoken to his mentor, Martin Shubik.

"At Yale, he was the guy I basically gravitated to," Krens said. "I learned a lot about philosophy from him, and the dynamics of game theory and how it improves decision making. You can basically say, Here is a cluster of outcomes that have one chance in ten thousand of happening, and here is a cluster of outcomes that have one chance in a thousand. And you can concentrate your decision making around the collapsing of those odds. It's about improvisation and a sense of play, but it's a structured sense of play. You take it to the next level, and the next level, and the next level. And that requires a flexibility that gives a certain credibility to the critique of my being opportunistic. But being opportunistic largely anticipates the sensitivity of the moment, seeing that these are the things that can be done at a particular time."

This is not the kind of discourse one usually gets from museum directors, but it is typical of Krens. "Look at the language Tom uses all the time," Michael Govan, his former deputy director and now the director of the Dia Center for the Arts, says. "Instead of 'museum' it's 'destination,' 'museum-going' becomes 'leisure activity,' sometimes 'visitors' become 'customers.' The words are metaphors for structuring meaning." And it works in certain worlds. With his macho manner and entrepreneurial flair, Krens is particularly adept at getting tough, self-made men, impervious to conventional flattery, to part with millions of dollars. "Tom has a great appreciation for the fact that financiers talk one way and art historians talk in another way," Martin Shubik says. "Most people don't understand that each of them speaks a foreign language, and what Tom did was to learn how to speak several." Krens's friend Mark Taylor, a professor of humanities and religion at Williams College, uses the lingo himself. "What Tom's involved with," Taylor says, "is not as it is commonly characterized—crass commercialism and franchising the Guggenheim. It grows out of a very sophisticated understanding about the interrelationship between culture and economics, because in this world economics is culture and culture is economics. What would it be like to build a museum that looked like Nasdaq? That's what Tom's trying to do."

Tom Krens was born in Brooklyn, in 1946. When he was a teen-ager, he told me, his father bought a cardboard-box company in upstate New York, and he and his parents and his younger brother, Drew, moved to the town of Newark, halfway between Rochester and Syracuse. His father died in 1976, and his mother now lives in the house in Williamstown, Massachusetts, that her older son bought when he taught at Williams College and which he still uses as a weekend and summer retreat. "Tom's devoted to her and includes her in everything up here," Taylor says, "even with all the muck-a-mucks."

Because of his unusual height, Krens excelled at basketball, which he played in high school and during his undergraduate years at Williams. He majored in political economy, and didn't know any of the so-called Williams Mafia—a group of art-history majors and athletes who were at the school in the sixties and who now occupy several high museum positions: Earl (Rusty) Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art; James N. Wood, director of the Art Institute of Chicago; John R. Lane, director of the Dallas Museum of Art; and Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (although Krens is now good friends with Varnedoe, a fellow motorcycle buff). Krens was first exposed to art history during his junior year, when he took a course in Chinese landscape painting that was taught by Sherman Lee, the longtime director of the Cleveland Museum of Art and a distinguished Asian-art scholar. "Looking at Chinese paintings with Sherman Lee was an epiphany of sorts," he says. "Most of my upbringing, well into college, was involvement in normal things—school, grades, sports. Art played no role." But a lot of jocks started looking at things differently in the sixties. "Certain kinds of alternative thinking were being posited everywhere," Krens says. "So maybe there was something in the air, or maybe in the smoke."

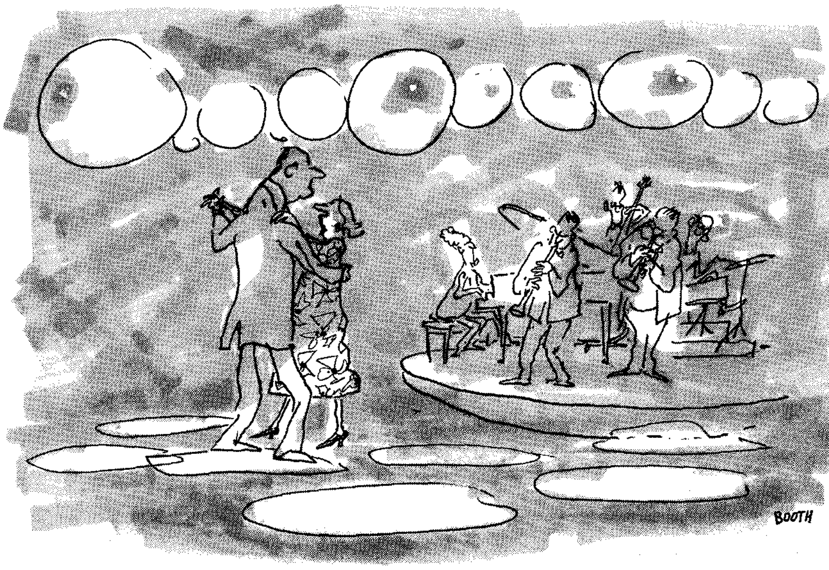
After graduating with honors from Williams in 1969, Krens took off for Europe, where he studied printmaking at a studio in Geneva and had a brief stint with a semi-professional basketball team in Nice. A knee injury removed the threat of military service, and he went back home to get a master's degree in studio art from the State University of New York at Albany. Then he returned to Williams to teach. He cultivated a cool, nonprofessorial personal style, wearing baseball caps, Hawaiian shirts, and cowboy boots to class and, of course, riding motorcycles. In 1980, shortly after the architect Charles Moore and his Connecticut firm, Centerbrook, were commissioned to design a new building for the Williams College Museum of Art, the director of the gallery quit and Krens was asked by the school's provost to supervise the project. "He thought I was practical and intelligent," Krens recalls, "and handling that ten-million-dollar budget taught me about setting goals and objectives and being clear about what you're doing. I've always tended, once I got into something, to mobilize intense focus and curiosity about it, whether it was basketball or golf or building a sandbox. I wasn't searching for the one true pathway. I found museums interesting and that led to a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more."

Last fall, Krens reflected on that juncture in his life to Raymond Learsy, a trustee of the Whitney Museum, who had gone to the opening of MASS MoCA and afterward attended an impromptu party at Krens's house. "It was very informal," Learsy says. "Everybody helped in the kitchen and set the table, a lovely camping-in dinner. Tom was very much at ease, and in the mood of the evening he started showing me his home, which he's very proud of, with a lap pool he designed. Then he showed me a large abstract painting. I said, 'That's interesting, Tom. Whose is that?' And he said, 'Mine. I used to paint pretty seriously until I was twenty-three or twenty-four, when I looked around and realized there was only so much I could do as a painter. I decided I would set on a different course, and would try to build the platform from which the great artists of my time could show their work.' "

After several years as director of the museum at Williams, Krens went to Yale and, as Martin Shubik says, got an idea about "what the new breed of museum director was going to look like." In 1984, Krens was shopped around by a corporate headhunting firm for several museum directorships, including that of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, which was embarking on a major fund-raising and construction program. But Krens's museum-building experience and new management credentials put off the board in San Francisco. One SFMOMA trustee told me, "We were scared to death by all his talk of flow charts and spreadsheets and computers and strategies. He never mentioned a work of art once." (The job went to John Lane, Krens's Williams contemporary.) The board members in San Francisco, including several self-made founders of companies—such as Donald Fisher, of the Gap, and Charles Schwab, of the discount brokerage firm—are among the most generous cultural donors in the country, and they adhere to an older model of civic benefaction. At the Guggenheim, on the other hand, the board members were then for the most part executives of large corporations who were concerned with the low status of their museum. In 1988, they were about to add a new gallery-and-office tower, designed by Gwathmey Siegel Architects, to the Wright building, and the sixty-eight-year-old director of the museum, Thomas Messer, did not feel up to the rigors of a major expansion project. An executive-search consultant put forward Krens, who found a more receptive audience for his computers-and-number-crunching come-on, and he landed the job.

That same year, Krens married Susan Lyons, a New York fabric designer. "She's as outgoing as Tom is reserved," says their friend Mark Taylor. " 'Grace' is the word I would use." The couple and their son recently moved from a modest loft off lower Fifth Avenue to a forty-two-hundred-square-foot, $2.35-million triplex in Tribeca. For several years they've kept a vacation house on Vieques, a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico, in addition to his old Williamstown digs. "Krens's wife is a seriously successful independent professional," Shubik says. "If he has a great promotion going, sometimes she'll go, sometimes she won't. They seem to have given each other space, but they've brought up a perfectly marvellous, normal child. Tom is an unbelievable father. He went to China to try to do a job of seducing the Chinese, and what does he do? He takes his five-year-old with him. How many corporate presidents would take their five-year-olds on a major international deal?"

Krens's first task as director of the Guggenheim was shepherding through the controversial expansion of Wright's building, and he has been enlarging the museum's domain ever since. One might well ask, however, why he



"Remember the great cranberry scare of '59? And the cellular phone hysteria of '93? Ralph Nader's killer hot dogs with the nitrates? Our evacuation at Love Canal? Remember the toxic-teeth scare, with the amalgam fillings leeching mercury into our gullets? Oh, Wheeler, kiss me now!"

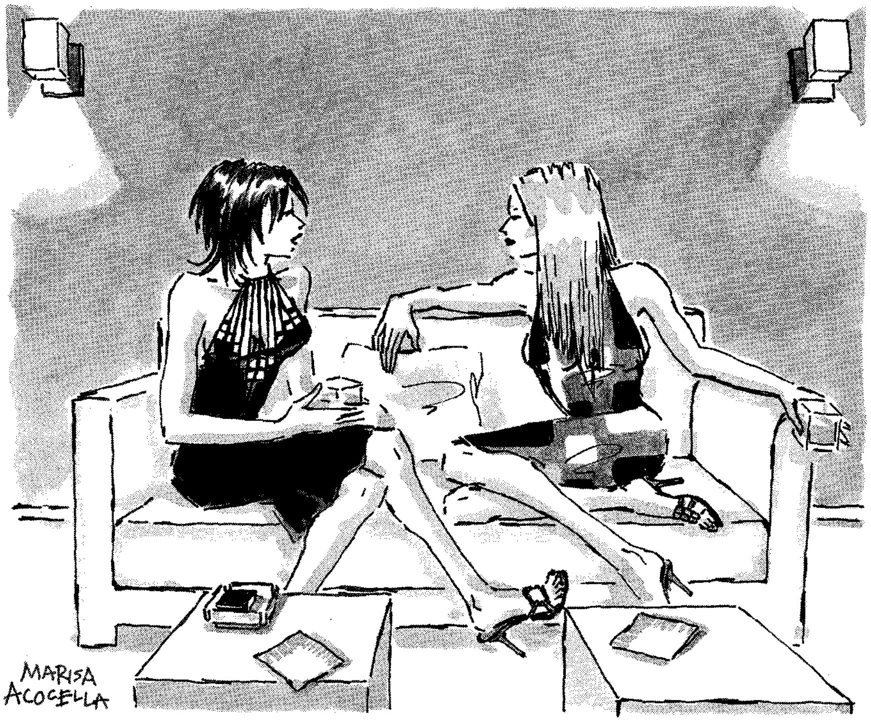
thinks that another branch of the Guggenheim is needed in New York right now, especially since the Guggenheim SoHo, which never caught on with the public and failed to meet its operating expenses, was scaled back recently. But the SoHo museum was nothing more than two renovated floors in a commercial building, and it shouldn't be compared with the proposal for the vast new facility. The SoHo Guggenheim didn't seem to have any particular mandate or reason for existing; the new museum, according to the letter of invitation to the dinner honoring Gehry, is to house the permanent collection of art from 1945 to the present. And then there is a general imperative. "Growth is almost a law," Krens said to me. "It's like a biological necessity. I remember when Michel David-Weill was on our board and he said, 'Either you grow and you change or you die.' "

Maybe the world really does need more places to see art. "There are forces out there in the world at large," Krens said, "and culture is becoming increasingly important. I've always said that there are only six things in the world—birth, life, death, sports, sex, and entertainment. If you take war out of the equation and add prosperity, culture is going to be more and more of a factor. Do we leave this culture only to Hollywood to figure out how to put more fannies into movie seats with 'Lethal Weapon 10' or 'Pokémon 5'? Or do you try to see the museum as an educational institution and try to make some small degree of relevance as you go forward? I don't know what the natural conclusion of all this expansion is—after the New York project, possibly one or two other plans. I'm not in a campaign that has to be won. On the other hand, you don't give up."

Many of the shows at the Guggenheim seem to be connected to a deal, or the vestige of an attempt to do one. "Amazons of the Avant-Garde," an excellent retrospective of six women artists of the Russian Constructivist movement, will open in New York in September. "This show is a small opportunity that came out of our big Russian initiative of 1992," Krens said, referring to his abortive bid to establish a Guggenheim satellite in a derelict bus-repair garage in Moscow. "We're a very big institution there and made an investment in people." This seems quite straightforward. But other shows have been tainted by their relationship to the deal. Two years ago, the museum's curatorial independence appeared to be compromised when the contemporary section of its "China: 5,000 Years" retrospective was dropped at a late stage, reportedly because officials in Beijing were displeased by its political content. "It was no secret that the Chinese didn't favor the caricatures of Mao Zedong," Krens acknowledges. "But, on the other hand, it simply never came up as an issue. You might say that we dodged a certain difficulty at the time, because we just literally didn't have the space to show it." Perhaps. But coincidentally, the Chinese, who had initially agreed to only a tenth of the Guggenheim's loan requests for historical pieces, in the end consented to ninety per cent.

Last year, the museum's exhibition of two private Surrealist collections included that of Daniel Filipacchi, a magazine publisher and Guggenheim board member. Several reviews focussed on the poor quality of some of the pieces that Filipacchi had insisted be shown. Krens sees no problem in allowing the lender to call the shots: "Yeah, Filipacchi was involved because he was interested in seeing that his ideas were represented. If he feels passionate about this thing, and the whole purpose of this exhibition is an engagement of the collector's passion, it's absolutely valid, even if I think it's crap. Now, if Filipacchi came to me as a trustee when we were doing a Surrealist exhibition and argued for the inclusion of a work because he believed in it and we didn't, then no possible way."

Issues of propriety surfaced again last summer with the Guggenheim SoHo show of Andy Warhol's "Last Supper" paintings, which are jointly owned by Heiner Friedrich, a private art dealer, and Peter M. Brant, a Guggenheim trustee and landlord of the building the museum has space in. The show "turns the Guggenheim into something like a dealer's backroom for Mr. Friedrich and Mr. Brant," Roberta Smith wrote in the New York *Times*. Quid-pro-quo dealings were questioned in the *Times* in December, when Carol Vogel reported that Giorgio Armani, the subject of a retrospective at the Guggenheim next fall, had agreed to donate some fifteen million dollars to the museum. I was told by the head of another museum to whom the show had been offered that they had turned it down because of the self-promotional funding.



"He's interesting. But he's not Brazilian-bikini-wax interesting."

A year and a half ago, a proposal for a Guggenheim branch designed by Frank Gehry at Pier 40 on the Lower West Side waterfront was jettisoned when news of the proposal appeared in the *Times* before the museum consulted with municipal and state officials. But the Bilbao Effect was not clear then. Now, one can imagine that the city might be well disposed to the new proposal, given the Guggenheim's record in high-profile civic development and income-spinning tourism, to say nothing of its bankable aura of culture.

Which is not to say that Krens's task will be easy. Bilbao came into being because of the ruthlessly hard bargain he drove with the Basques, who were willing to pay virtually any price to flaunt their cultural independence from Spain. There is no chance that he will get New York City or State to bear a similar financial burden for the new building, its upkeep, and acquisitions. "For the first ten years that Tom was director," Lisa Dennison told me, "the money didn't come from the board. Sure, we got Ron Perelman's name on our rotunda and he was our president, but he was not an active leader, like Leonard Lauder is at the Whitney. The expansion happened because of Tom and foreign governments and sponsorship from European and Asian corporations. It was the attraction of the international museum, which nobody else could offer." Krens has made his really successful deals abroad, and he is in a very different position in New York. "While everybody else in New York was fighting over who would join which board," Dennison said, "Tom said, 'Forget it. I cede New York.' And now all of a sudden we're back where you've sort of kicked everybody in the teeth and have said, 'I don't care about you, I don't need you.' Now he needs New York in a different way. And Tom isn't the kind of guy who runs around town all week having lunch. On that level he's not charming and amiable."

Krens can, indeed, be clumsy in his relations with donors. He so alienated one Guggenheim board member, Elaine Dannheisser, that she quit, in 1996, and donated her estimable collection of contemporary art to MOMA, where she was made a trustee and given a major exhibition with a full-scale catalogue. Though he projects a powerful personality, he is anything but charismatic, and he may be the shy man his close friends say he is. But when his imagination is captured by a project or he wants to win over a potential supporter, he can be irresistibly persuasive. The art dealer Paula Cooper noticed this when she was in Bilbao last summer. "We walked in and, lo and behold, there was Tom in the big gallery with the Richard Serras, holding forth with a group of people from the United States," she recalled. "His extraordinary energy almost took up the whole room. That's a huge space and those are huge pieces, but he competed with them. It was palpable. He's so full of enthusiasm and thrilled with what he's doing. He's so positive and just goes right ahead. Nothing can stop him."

Krens's decision to present the model of the new museum at the Gehry dinner on April 18th, and to exhibit it over the summer, seems to indicate that he thinks he can start a groundswell of popular support for his audacious proposal. "I call it the Statue of Liberty Effect," Peter Lewis says. "That's what happened when people loved the idea for the statue and started putting money in wheelbarrows. Hey, if this has merit and catches the public's fancy, then maybe it'll happen, too. Tom's the quarterback here. This is his play, and he doesn't think it's a Hail Mary. He thinks it's Jerry Rice down the sideline for six and he's got it. And I'm sitting in the stands saying, 'Wait a minute, they've got their defenses there.' But we'll see."

Although the area around the proposed Manhattan Project site is not heavily residential, several nearby office buildings have been converted to apartments recently, and the Guggenheim is likely to face strong local opposition. "They are going to have a difficult time gaining all the approvals that they would need for a building that size," says Paul Goldstein, the district manager of Community Board No. 1, which includes the area around the two piers that Gehry's building would replace. "The city will be expected to provide all sorts of infrastructure improvements, which would create environmental issues, with the state, in particular, and the Army Corps of Engineers. I would suspect that our reaction would be that we are all for a museum out there, but we would have serious concerns about other uses that they might come up with to generate more income."

But Krens has made a career out of going up against the opposition and winning where everyone says he will fail. "One of the big secrets of Tom's success," says Dennison in the franchise-speak that those around him tend to pick up, "is the concept of global sponsorships, because you want to support a museum that has as many bases in as many places as possible. And ideally that means you're touching more markets. You've got these landmark buildings as well, and that's a pretty powerful thing to sell to the corporate world. You get more for your dollar because you're touching so many more markets. It's such a simple philosophy."

John Walsh, the director of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, met me for coffee not long ago to talk about the changes he has witnessed in the new age of museums. Walsh worked under Thomas Hoving at the Metropolitan in the sixties and seventies, at the dawn of the blockbuster age. "The new Guggenheim project sounds to me a lot like real-estate development," he said, "like a Virgin Megastore or some Trumpish mixed-use scheme. It might have a great deal of pulling power, but very likely is not going to attract visitors to galleries in a state of mind like the one I think museums traditionally try to induce—an absorptive, slow, curious, unpressured receptivity. I have to think they'll go to the new Guggenheim like shoppers.

"I am rooting for Tom in one respect," Walsh went on, "in that somebody who can successfully broaden the notion of what a museum is may well make a huge contribution. The challenge is to persuade philanthropists that to do something powerful and strong and enduring involves faith and money, in large quantities. Luckily, the money is out there. There's never been more. But it's going to take a lot of brains and eloquence and persistence to get people to understand that museums are worth large amounts of private investment to assure the same degree of financial and intellectual freedom that is given to universities. And if the professionals can't make that point, the moment will be lost."

I recalled something that Krens had said during one of our discussions about his vision for the future of the Guggenheim empire: "I can't define what the museum is. I have no idea. I see it as a series of opportunities that are constantly being created, a far more flexible entity. I know that irritates some people, because they might see in that flexibility a certain kind of opportunism. What can you say? It is what it is." ♦

FICTION

REVIVAL ROAD

BY LOUISE ERDRICH

JEFF JACOBSON

From the air, our road must look like a length of rope flung down haphazardly, a thing of inscrutable loops and half-finished question marks. But there is a design to Revival Road. The beginning of the road is paved, though with a material inferior to that of the main highway, which snakes south from our college town into the villages and factory cities of New Hampshire. When the town has the money, the road is also coated with light gravel. Over the course of a summer, those bits of stone are pressed into the softened tar, making a smooth surface on which the cars pick up speed. By midwinter, though, the frost has crept beneath the road and flexed, creating heaves that force the cars to slow again. I'm glad when that happens, for children walk down this road to the bus stop below. They walk past our house with their dogs, wearing puffy jackets of saturated brilliance—hot pink, hot yellow, hot blue. They change shape and grow before my eyes, becoming the young drivers of fast cars that barely miss the smaller children, who, in their turn, grow up and drive away from here.

One day in the dead of winter, one of these young drivers appeared at our door, knocking so frantically that my mother called to me in alarm. I came rushing from the basement laundry room to see him standing behind the glass of the back storm door, jacketless and shivering. I saw that he was missing a finger from the hand he raised, and recognized him as the Eyke boy, now grown, years past fooling with his father's chainsaw. But not his father's new credit-bought car. Davan Eyke had sneaked his father's automobile out for an illicit spin and lost control as he came down the hill beside our house. The car had slid toward a steep gully lined with birch and, by lucky chance, had come to rest pinned precisely between two trunks. The trees now held the expensive and unpaid-for white car in a perfect vise. Not one dent. Not one silvery scratch. Not yet. It was Davan's hope that if I hooked a chain to my Subaru and backed up the hill I would be able to pull his car gently free.

My chain snapped. So did many others over the course of the afternoon. At the bottom of the road, a collection of cars, trucks, equipment, and people gathered. As the car was unwedged, as it was rocked, yanked, pushed, and released, as other ideas were tried and discarded, and as the newness of the machine wore off, Davan saw that his plan had failed and he began to despair. With empty eyes, he watched a dump truck winch his father's vehicle half free, then slam it flat on its side and drag it shrieking up a lick of gravel that the town's road agent had laid down for traction.

Over the years our town, famous for the softness and drama of its natural light, has drawn artists from the large cities of the Eastern Seaboard. Most of them have had some success in the marketplace, and since New Hampshire does not tax income—preferring a thousand other less effective ways to raise revenue—they find themselves wealthier here, albeit slightly bored. For company, they are forced to rely on locals such as myself—a former schoolteacher, fired for insubordination, a semi-educated art lover. Down at the end of our road, in a large brick Cape attached to a white clapboard carriage house (now a studio), there lives such an artist.

Kurt Heissman is a striking man, formerly much celebrated for his assemblages of stone, but now mainly ignored. He hasn't produced a major piece in years. His works often incorporate massive pieces of native slate or granite, and he occasionally hires young local men to help with their execution. His assistants live on the grounds—there is a small cottage sheltered by an old white pine—and are required to be available for work at any time of the day or night. There is no telling when the inspiration to fit one stone in a certain position upon another may finally strike.

Heissman favors the heavy plaid woollens sold by mail, and his movements are ponderous and considered. His gray hair is cut in a brushy crewcut, the same do that Uncle Sam once gave him. Though he complains about his loss of energy, he is in remarkable health at fifty. His hands are oddly, surprisingly, delicate and small. His feet are almost girlish in their neatly tied boots, a contrast to the rest of him, so boldly cut and rugged. I have heard that the size of a man's hands and feet is an accurate predictor of the size of his sex, but with Kurt Heissman this does not prove to be the case. If this statement is crude, that is of no concern to me—I am citing a fact. I love the way this man is made.

The stones that he gathers for possible use intrigue me. I think I know, sometimes, what it is about them that draws him. He says that the Japanese have a word for the essence apparent in a rock, and I suppose that I love him for his ability to see that essence. I wish sometimes that I were stone. Then he would see me as I am: peach-colored granite with flecks of angry mica. My balance is slightly off. I am leaning toward him, farther, farther. Should I try to right myself? This is not an aesthetic choice.

When Davan Eyke was forced to leave home after the accident, he did not go far, just up to Kurt Heissman's little guest cottage beneath the boughs of the beautiful, enfolding pine. The tree has an unusually powerful shape, and Heissman and I have speculated often on its age. We are both quite certain that it was small, a mere sapling, too tender to bother with, when the agents of the English king first marked the tallest and straightest trees in the forests of New England as destined for the shipyards of the Royal Navy, where they would become masts from which to hang great sails. Any large pine growing now was a seedling when the pine canopy, so huge and dense that no light shone onto the centuries of bronze needles below, was axed down. This tree splits, halfway up its trunk, into three parts that form an enormous crown. In that crotch there is a raven's nest, which is unusual, since ravens are shy of Northeasterners, having a long collective memory for the guns, nets, and poisons with which they were once almost eradicated.

The ravens watched when Davan Eyke moved in, but they watch everything. They are humorous, highly intelligent birds, and knew immediately that Davan Eyke would be trouble. Therefore they disturbed his sleep by dropping twigs and pinecones on the painted tin roof of his cottage; they shat on the lintel, stole small things he left in the yard—pencils, coins, his watch—and hid them. They also laughed. The laughter of a raven is a sound unendurably human. You may know it, if you have heard it in your own throat, as the noise of that peculiarly German word *Schadenfreude*. Perhaps the raven's laughter, its low rasp, reminds us of the depth of our own human darkness. Of course, there is nothing human about it and its source is unknowable, as are the hearts of all things wild. Davan Eyke was bothered, though, enough so that he complained to Heissman about the birds.

"Get used to them" was all the artist said to Davan Eyke.

Heissman tells me this one day as I bring him the mail, a thing I do often when he feels close to tossing himself into the throes of some ambitious piece. At those times, he cannot or will not break the thread of his concentration by making a trip to the post office. There is too much at stake. This could be the day that his talent will resurrect itself painfully from the grief into which it has been plunged.

"I have in mind a perception of balance, although the whole thing must be brutally off the mark and highly dysphoric." He speaks like this—pompous, amused at his own pronouncements, his eyes brightening beneath their heavy white brows.

"Awkward," I say, to deflate him. "Maybe even ugly."

In his self-satisfaction there is more than a hint of the repressed Kansas farm boy he was when he first left home for New York City. That boy is buried under many layers now—there is a veneer of faked European ennui, an aggressive macho crackle, an edge of judgmental Lutheranism, and a stratum of terrible sadness over the not so recent loss of his second wife, who was killed in a car accident out West.

"Do you know," Heissman said once, "that a stone can be wedged just so into the undercarriage of a car that, when you press the gas pedal, it sticks and shoots the car forward at an amazing speed?" That was the gist of the fluke occurrence that had killed his wife. A high-school prank in Montana, near Flathead Lake. Stones on the highway. As she pressed on the brakes, Heissman says, her speed increased. Not a beautiful woman, in her pictures, but forceful, intelligent, athletic. She is resembled by their daughter, Freda, a girl who seems to have committed herself to dressing in nothing but black and purple since she entered Sarah Lawrence. When Heissman speaks of Freda's coming home for a weekend, his voice is tender, almost dreamy. At those times, it has a kind of yearning that I would do anything to hear directed toward me. I'm jealous. That is just the way it is. I tell myself that he sees Freda not as his actual self-absorbed and petulant daughter but as the incarnation of his lost wife. But I don't like Freda and she doesn't like me.

"He's not working out," Heissman says now, of Davan Eyke. "I shouldn't hire locals."

I shrug off his use of the word "local." After all, I am one, although I qualify in Heissman's mind as both local and of the larger world, since I spent several years in London, living in fearful solitude on the edge of Soho and failing my degree.

"You wouldn't have to hire anybody if you used smaller rocks," I answer, my voice falsely dismissive.

Our friendship is based, partly, on the pretense that I do not take his work, or his failure to work, seriously, and do not mind whether we are sexual or not, when in fact we both know that I value his work and am quietly, desperately, with no hope of satisfaction, in love with him. He believes that I am invulnerable. I protect myself with every trick I know.

"This guy's a brainless punk," Heissman continues.

"I thought you knew that when you hired him."

"I suppose I could have told by looking at him, but I didn't really look."

"The only job he's ever had was cutting grass, and half the time he broke the lawnmower. He broke so many on this road that people stopped hiring him. Still," I tell Heissman, "he's not a bad person, not even close to bad. He's just . . ." I try to get at the thing about Eyke. "He doesn't care about anything." My defense is lame, and my lover does not buy it.

"I was desperate. I was working on 'Construction No. 20.' "

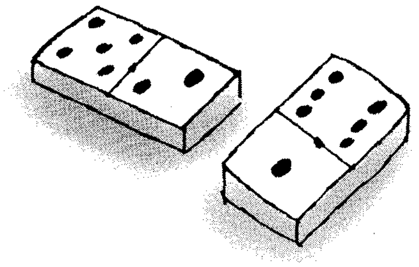
"No. 20" is the working title of a piece commissioned many, many years ago by a large Minneapolis cereal company for its corporate grounds. It is still not finished.

Davan Eyke appears, and I stay and watch the two men wrestle steel and stone. Eyke looks slight next to his boss. Together, though, they haul stones from the woods, drag and lever blocks of pale marble delivered from the Rutland quarries. If Davan were artistic, this would be an ideal job, a chance to live close to and learn from a master. As it is, Davan's enthusiasm quickly gives way to the resentment he transfers from his father to his boss.

My mother sighs and makes a face when I tell her that Freda Heissman is visiting her father, and that he has invited us to dinner. Heissman often invites us to dinners that do not happen once Freda becomes involved. She rails against me; I suspect that she has prevailed upon her father more than once to break off our friendship. There is a low energy to Freda, a fantastic kind of drama, a way of doing ordinary things with immense conviction. When I first met her, it was hard to believe that the dots she splashed on paper, the C-plus science projects she displayed with such bravura were only adequate. Looking at her through the lens of her dead mother's image, however, Heissman is convinced that she is extraordinary.

I shouldn't be so hard on Freda, I suppose. But is it proper for the young to be so disappointing? And Heissman—why can't he see? I have dearly wished that she'd find a boyfriend for herself, and yet our sense of class distinction in this country is so ingrained that neither of us had considered Davan Eyke, either to dismiss or encourage such a match. There he was, sullenly enduring his surroundings, winging pebbles at the tormenting birds, but since he was not of the intelligentsia (such as we are) who live on Revival Road, he didn't occur to us.

This is the sort of family he is from: The Eykes. His father is a tinkering, sporadically employed mechanic. His mother drives the local gas truck. In their packed-earth yard, a dog was tied for many years, a lovely thing, part German shepherd and part husky, one eye brown and one blue. The dog was never taken off a short chain that bound it to the trunk of a tree. It lived in that tiny radius through all weathers, lived patiently, enduring each dull moment of its life, showing no hint of going mean.

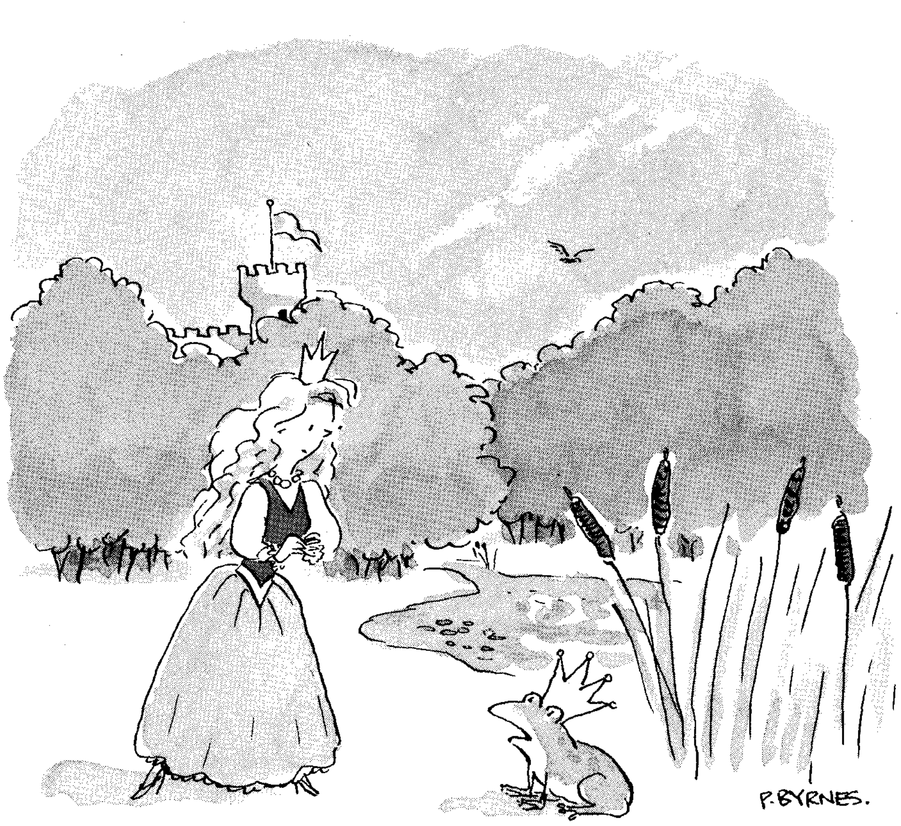


I suppose I am no better than the Eykes. I called the Humane Society once, but when no one came and the dog still wound the chain one way and then the other, around and around the tree, I did nothing more. Rather than confronting the Eykes—which seemed unthinkable to me, since Mr. Eyke not only hauled away our trash but mowed our field and kept the trees in good condition by plucking away the tall grasses at their trunks—I was silent. From time to time, I brought the dog a bone when I passed, and felt a certain degree of contempt for the Eykes, as one does for people who mistreat an animal.

That is one failure I regret having to do with the Eykes. The other is my shortsightedness regarding Davan and Freda.

A turbulent flow of hormones runs up and down this road. On my walks, I've seen adolescence bolt each neighbor child upward like a sun-drunk plant. Most of the houses on the road are surrounded by dark trees and a tangle of undergrowth. No two are within shouting distance. Yet you *know*, merely by waving to the parents whose haunted eyes bore through the windshields of their cars. You hear, as new trail bikes and motorbikes rip the quiet, as boom boxes blare from their perches on newly muscled shoulders. The family cars, once so predictable in their routes, buck and raise dust as they race up and down the hill. This is a painful time, and you avert your eyes from the houses that contain it. The very foundations of those homes seem less secure. Love falters and blows. Steam rises from the ditches, and sensible neighbors ask no questions.

Davan hit like that, a compact freckled boy who suddenly grew long-jawed and reckless. Mother says that she knew it was the end when he started breaking lawnmowers, slamming them onto the grass and stones so savagely that the blades bent. She quietly had our mower fixed and did not hire him again. His brown hair grew until it reached his shoulders, and a new beard came in across his chin like streaks of dirt. Frighteningly, Davan walked the road from time to time, dressed in camouflage, hugging his father's crossbow and arrows, with which he transfixed woodchucks. That phase passed, and then he lapsed into a stupor of anger that lasted for years and culminated in the damage he did to his father's new car by driving it into the trees. It was the most expensive thing his family had ever bought, and since he left home soon after that, it was clear he was not forgiven.



"No, it's just that the royal inbreeding makes me look like a frog."

Freda Heissman, on the other hand, had resolved her adolescence beautifully. After a few stormy junior-high-school years following her mother's death, she settled into a pattern of achieving small things with great flair, for, as I mentioned, she had no talents and was at most a mediocre student. She gave the impression that she was going places, though, and so she did go places. Still, her acceptance into a prestigious college was a mystery to all who knew her. Her teachers, including me, were stymied. Perhaps it was the interview, one woman told my mother.

Later, in the seething, watery spring darkness, Heissman enters our house via the back-porch screen door, to which he has the key. It is the only door of the house that unlocks with that key, and I keep things that way for the following reason: should I tire, should I have the enlightenment or the self-discipline or the good sense to stop Heissman from coming to me in the night, it will be a simple matter. One locksmith's fee. One tossed key. No explanation owed. Though my mother must sense, must conjecture, must know without ever saying so that Heissman's night visits occur, we do not speak of it and never have. Her room is at the other end of the house. We live privately, in many respects, and although this is how we prefer to live, there are times when I nearly spill over with the need to confide my feelings.

For when he steps into my room it is as though I am waking on some strange and unlikely margin. As though the ocean has been set suddenly before me. Landlocked, you forget. Then, suddenly, you are wading hip high into the surge of waves. There is so much meaning, so much hunger in our mouths and skin. This is happiness, I think every time. I've had lovers, several, and what I like best is the curious unfolding confessional quality of sex. I seek it, demand it of Heissman, and for a matter of hours he is bare to me, all candor and desire. He begs things of me. *Put your mouth here.* In nakedness we are the reverse of our day selves.

Ravens are the birds I'll miss most when I die. If only the darkness into which we must look were composed of the black light of their limber intelligence. If only we did not have to die at all and instead became ravens. I've watched these birds so hard that I feel their black feathers split out of my skin. To fly from one tree to another, the raven hangs itself, hawklike, on the air. I hang myself that same way in sleep, between one day and the next. When we're young, we think we are the only species worth knowing. But the more I come to know people, the better I like ravens. In this house, open to a wide back field and pond, I am living within their territory. A few years ago, there were eight or more of them in Heissman's white pine. Now just four live there, and six live somewhere in the heavy fringe of woods beyond my field. Two made their nest in the pine. Three hatchlings were reared. The other raven was killed by Davan Eyke.

You may wonder how on earth an undisciplined, highly unpleasant, not particularly coördinated youth could catch and kill a raven. They are infernally cautious birds. For instance, having long experience with poisoned carcasses, they will not take the first taste of dead food but let the opportunistic blue jays eat their fill. Only when they see that the bold, greedy jays have survived do the ravens drive them off and settle in to feed. Davan had to use his father's crossbow to kill a raven. One day when Heissman was gone, he sat on the front stoop of his little cottage and waited for the birds to gather in their usual circle of derision. As they laughed at him among themselves, stepping through the branches, he slowly raised the crossbow. They would have vanished at the sight of a gun. But they were unfamiliar with other instruments. They did not know the purpose or the range of the bow. One strayed down too far, and Davan's arrow pierced it completely. Heissman drove into the yard and saw Davan standing over the bird. Amazingly, it wasn't dead. With some fascination, Davan was watching it struggle on the shaft of the arrow, the point of which was driven into the earth. Heissman walked over, snapped the arrow off, and drew it tenderly, terribly, from the bird's body. For a moment the raven sprawled, limp, on the ground, and then it gathered itself, walked away, and entered the woods to die. Overhead and out of range, the other birds wheeled. For once, they were silent.

"Let me see the bow," Heissman said conversationally. Davan handed it to him, prepared to point out its marvellous and lethal features. "And the arrows." Davan handed those over, too. "I'll be right back," Heissman said.

Davan waited. Heissman walked across the yard to his woodpile, turned, and fitted an arrow into the groove. Then he raised the bow. Davan stepped aside, looked around for the target, looked uneasily back at Heissman, then touched his own breast as the sculptor lifted the shoulder piece. *Shot.* Davan leapt to the other side of the white pine and vaulted off into the brush. The arrow stuck in the tree, just behind his shoulder. Then Heissman laid the bow on the block he used to split his firewood. He axed the weapon neatly in half. He laid the arrows down next, like a bunch of scallions, and chopped them into short lengths. He walked into his house and phoned me. "If you see that boy running past your house," he said, "here's why."

"You shot at him?"

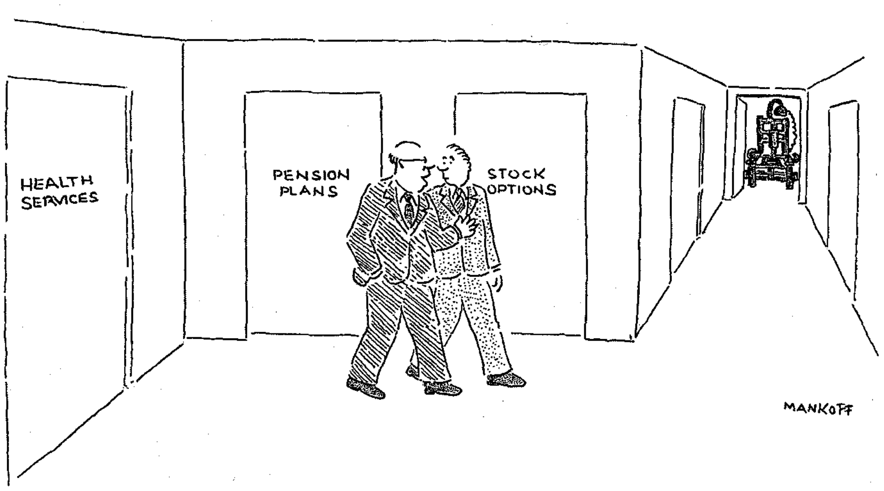
"Not to hit him."

"But still, my God."

Heissman, embarrassed, did not speak of this again.

Davan had saved enough money, from Heissman's pay (or so we thought), to buy himself an old Toyota, dusty red with a splash of dark rust on the door where a dent had raised metal through the paint. The car now spewed grit and smoke on the road as he drove it back and forth to town. He had returned to his room in his parents' house and he resumed his chore of feeding the dog every day, though he never untied it from the tree.

The dog's maple grew great patches of liver-colored moss and dropped dead limbs. Shit-poisoned, soaked with urine at the base, and nearly girdled by the continual sawing and wearing of the chain, the tree had, for years, yellowed and then blazed orange, unhealthily, the first of all the trees on the road. Then, one day that spring, it fell over, and the dog walked off calmly, like the raven, into the woods, dragging a three-foot length of chain. Only the dog didn't die. Perhaps it had been completely mad all along, or perhaps it was that moment after the tree went down when, unwrapping itself nervously, the dog took one step beyond the radius of packed dirt within which it had lived since it was a fat puppy. Perhaps that step, the paw meeting grass, rang along the spine of the dog, fed such new light into its brain that it could not contain the barrage of information. At any rate, the outcome of that moment wasn't to be seen for several weeks, by which time Davan had successfully raised dust near Freda on illicit visits, and had secretly taken her out with him to local parties, where at first she enjoyed her status as a college-goer and the small sensation caused by her New York clothing styles. Then, at some point, something awakened in her, some sense of pity or conscience. Before that, I'd seen nothing remarkable about Heissman's daughter, other than her clothes. Her unkindness, her laziness, her feeling of enormous self-worth—all were typical of women her age. Then, suddenly, she had this urge to care for and rescue Davan Eyke, an abrupt unblocking of compassion which made her come clean with her father, a humanity that thoroughly terrified Heissman.



"O.K., right about now I'll bet you're thinking, What's the catch?"

I step out of the car with the mail and see Heissman standing, blocklike, in front of Davan, who slouches before the older man with obdurate weariness. Locked in their man-space, they do not acknowledge me. Heissman is, of course, telling Davan Eyke that he doesn't want him to see Freda. He probably calls Davan some name, or makes some threat, for Davan steps back and stares at him alertly, hands up, as though ready to block a punch, which never comes. Heissman kicks him over, instead, with a rageful ease that astonishes Davan Eyke. From the ground, he shakes his head in puzzlement at Heissman's feet. When Heissman draws his leg back to kick again, I move forward. The kick stops midway. Davan rises. The two stare at each other with spinning hatred—I can almost see the black web between them.

"Pay me," Davan says, backing away.

"Say you won't see her first."

Davan starts to laugh, raucous, crackling, a raven's laugh. I can still hear it through the car window when he revs and peels out.

I don't understand why Heissman detests the boy so much; it is as though he has tapped some awful gusher in the artist and now, in a welter of frustrated energy, Heissman starts working. He finishes "No. 20." He produces, hardly sleeps. Hardly sees me.

It is difficult for a woman to admit that she gets along with her own mother. Somehow, it seems a form of betrayal. So few do. To join in the company of women, to be adults, we go through a period of proudly boasting of having survived our mothers' indifference, anger, overpowering love, the burden of their pain, their tendency to drink or teetotal, their warmth or coldness, praise or criticism, sexual confusion or embarrassing clarity. It isn't enough that our mothers sweated, labored, bore their daughters nobly or under total anesthesia or both. No. They must be responsible for our psychic weaknesses for the rest of their lives. It is all right to forgive our fathers. We all know that. But our mothers are held to a standard so exacting that it has no principles. They simply must be to blame.

I reject that, as my mother sits before me here. She has just had an operation to restore her vision. Her eyes are closed beneath small plastic cups and gauze bandages. When I change the gauze and put in the drops twice a day, it strikes me that there is something in the nakedness of her face and shut eyes that is like that of a newborn animal. Her skin has always been extremely clean and fine. Often, she has smelled to me of soap, but now she has added a light perfume, which enables her in her blindness to retrace her steps through the house with confidence, by smell.

That is how I know that she knows he has been here. Last night, he came down off the manic high in which he had hung between one uninspired month and the next. It is morning. Even to me, the house smells different after Heissman has made love to me in the night, more alive, alert with a fresh exquisite maleness. Still, for me to openly become Heissman's lover would upset the balance of our lives. My deadlocked secret love and unsecret contempt are the only hold I have over him, my only power. So things remain as they are. My mother and I maintain a calm life together. I do not dread, as others might, her increasing dependence. It is only that I have the strange, unadult wish that if she must pass into death, that rough mountain, she take me with her. Not leave me scratching at the shut seam of stone.

Spring on this road commences with a rush of dark rain, slick mud, and then dry warmth, which is bad for our wells and ponds but wonderful to see in the woods. New sounds, the rapturous trilling of peepers, that electric sexual whine, the caterwauling of the barred owls, startling us from sleep, raising bubbles of tension in my blood. I cannot imagine myself changing the lock. Without a word, without a sound, I circle Heissman, dragging my chain.

All of March, there is no sign of the dog that slipped free of the dead maple, and Mother and I can only assume that it has been taken in somewhere as a stray or, perhaps, shot from a farmer's back porch for running deer. That is how it probably survives—if it does—squeezing through a hole in the game-park fence, living on hand-raised pheasants and winter-killed carcasses.

The dog reappears in the full blush of April. During that week, leaves shoot from buds and the air films over with a bitter and intangible green that sweetens and darkens in so short a time. One balmy night, my neighbors up the road, the ones who clear-cut fifty acres of standing timber in four shocking days, have their cocker spaniel eaten. They leave the dog out all night on its wire run, and the next morning, from the back door, Ann Flaud in her nightgown pulls the dog's lead toward her. It rattles across the ground. At the end of it hangs an empty collar, half gnawed through.

There is little else to find. Just a patch of blood and the two long, mitteny brown ears. Coydogs are blamed—those mythical creatures invoked for every loss—then Satanists. I know it is the dog. I have seen her at the edge of our field, loping on long springy wolf legs. She does not look starved. She is alive—fat, glossy, huge.

She takes a veal calf for supper one night, pulled from its standup torture pen at the one working farm on the road that survived the eighties. She steals suet out of people's bird feeders, eats garbage, meadow voles, and frogs. A few cats disappear. She is now seen regularly, never caught. People build stout fences around their chicken pens. It is not until she

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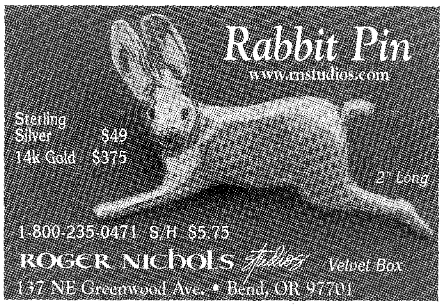
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meets the school bus, though, mouth open, the sad eye of liquid brown and the hungry eye of crystal blue trained on the doors as they swish open, that the state police become involved.

A dragnet of shotgun-armed volunteers and local police fans through the woods. Parked on this road, an officer with a vague memory of a car theft in Concord runs a check on Davan Eyke's red car as it flashes past. Eyke is on his way up to Heissman's, where Freda, less boldly attired than usual and biting black lacquer from her nails, waits to counsel him. They go for a walk in the woods, leaving the car in the driveway, in full view of Heissman's studio. They return, and then, despite Heissman's express, uncompromising, direct orders, Freda does exactly what young people sometimes do—the opposite. The human heart is every bit as tangled as our road. She gets into the car with Eyke.

On the police check, the car turns up stolen, and as it speeds back down from Heissman's an hour later the police officer puts on his siren and spins out in pursuit. There ensues a dangerous game of tag that the newspapers will call a high-speed chase. On our narrow roads, filled with hairpin turns, sudden drops, and abrupt hills, speed is a harrowing prospect. Davan Eyke tears down the highway, hangs a sharp left on Tapper Road, and jumps the car onto a narrow gravel path used mainly for walking horses. He winds up and down the hill like a slingshot, joins the wider road, then continues toward Windsor, over the country's longest covered bridge, into Vermont, where, at the first stoplight, he screeches between two cars in a sudden left-hand turn against the red. On blacktop now, the car is clocked at over a hundred miles per hour. There isn't much the police can do but follow as fast as they dare.

Another left, and it seems that Davan is intent on fleeing back toward Claremont, on the New Hampshire side. The police car radios ahead as he swings around a curve on two wheels and makes for the bridge that crosses the wide, calm Connecticut, which serves as a boundary between New Hampshire and Vermont. It is a cold, wet, late-spring afternoon, and, according to the sign that blurs before Davan's eyes, the bridge is liable to freeze before the road. It has. The car hits ice at perhaps a hundred and twenty and soars straight over the low guardrail. A woman in the oncoming lane says later that the red car was travelling at such a velocity that it seemed to gain purchase in the air and hang above the river. She also swears that she saw, before the car flew over, the white flower of a face pressing toward the window. No one sees a thing after that, although the fisherman pulling his boat onto shore below the bridge is suddenly aware of a great shadow behind him, as though a cloud has fallen out of the sky or a bird has touched his back lightly with its wing. He turns too slowly, even in his panic, to see anything but the river in its timeless run. The impact of the small car on the water is so tremendous that there is no ripple to mark its passage from a state of movement to complete arrest. It is as though the car and its passengers are simply atomized, reduced instantaneously to their elements.

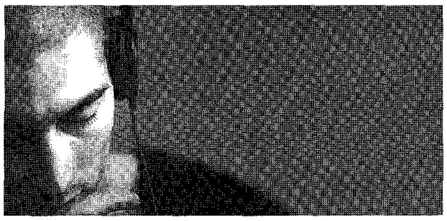
Within fifteen minutes of the radio call, all the pickups and cars on our road gather their passengers and firearms and sweep away from the dog posse to the scene of greater drama at the bridge. Although the wreckage isn't found for days and requires four wetsuited divers to locate and gather, the police make a visit to Heissman's, on the strength of the woman witness's story. Believing that Freda has gone over the bridge as well, they take me along to break the news to my friend.

I wait on the edge of the field for Heissman, my hand on the stump of an old pine's first limb. I hear the ravens deep in the brush, the grating *haw-haw* of their announcement, and it occurs to me that he might just show up with Freda. But he doesn't, only shambles toward me alone at my call. I feel for the first time in our mutual life that I am invested with startling height, even power, perhaps more intelligence than I am used to admitting I possess. I feel a sickening omnipotence.

He starts at my naked expression, asks, "What?"

"Davan's car," I report, "went over the bridge."

I don't know what I expect, then, from Heissman. Anything but his off-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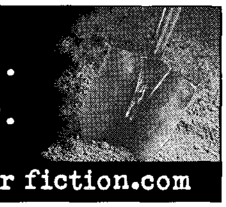
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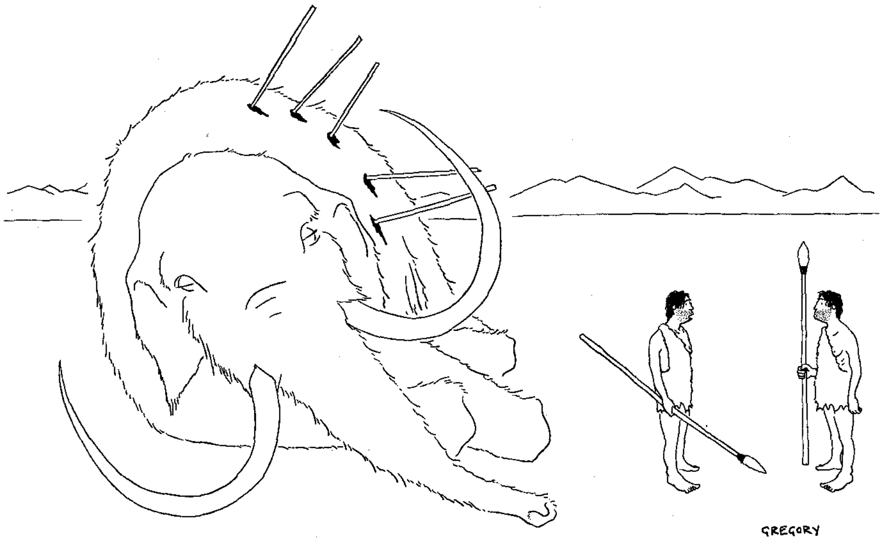

"Should we pick up something for the folks who don't eat red meat?"

• •

hand, strangely shuttered nonreaction. He apparently has no idea that Freda could be in the car. Unable to go on, I fall silent. For all his sullen gravity, Davan had experienced and expressed only a shy love for Heissman's daughter. It was an emotion he was capable of feeling, as was the fear that made him press the gas pedal. *The gas pedal,* I think. *The gas pedal and the wedged-in stone.*

I stare at Heissman. My heart creaks shut. I turn away from him and walk into the woods. At first, I think I'm going off to suffer like the raven, but as I walk on and on I know that I will be fine and I will be loyal, pathologically faithful. The realization grounds me. I feel more alive. The grass cracks beneath each step I take and the sweet dry dust of it stirs around my ankles. In a long, low swale of a field that runs into a dense pressure of trees, I stop and breathe carefully.

Whenever you leave cleared land, when you step from some place carved out, plowed, or traced by a human and pass into the woods, you must leave something of yourself behind. It is that sudden loss, I think, even more than the difficulty of walking through undergrowth, that keeps people firmly fixed to paths. In the woods, there is no right way to go, of course, no trail to follow but the law of growth. You must leave behind the notion that things are right. Just look around you. Here is the way things are. Twisted, fallen, split at the root. What grows best does so at the expense of what's beneath. A white birch feeds on the pulp of an old hemlock and supports the grapevine that will slowly throttle it. In the dead wood of another tree grow fungi black as devil's hooves. Overhead the canopy, tall pines that whistle and shudder and choke off light from their own lower branches.

The dog is not seen and never returns to Revival Road, never kills another spaniel or chicken, never appears again near the house where her nature devolved, never howls in the park, and never harms a child. Yet at night, in bed, my door unlocked, as I wait I imagine that she pauses at the edge of my field, suspicious of the open space, then lopes off with her length of chain striking sparks from the exposed ledge and boulders. I have the greatest wish to stare into her eyes, but if I should meet her face to face, breathless and heavy-muzzled, shining with blood, would the brown eye see me or the blue eye?

He has weakened, Heissman, he needs me these days. My mother says, out of nowhere, *He's not who you think he is.* I touch her shoulders, reassuringly. She shrugs me off because she senses with disappointment that I actually do know him, right down to the ground. Shame, pleasure, ugliness, loss: they are the heat in the night that tempers the links. And then there is forgiveness when a person is unforgivable, and a man weeping like a child, and the dark house soaking up the hollow cries. ♦

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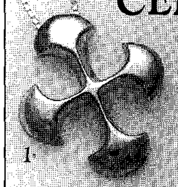
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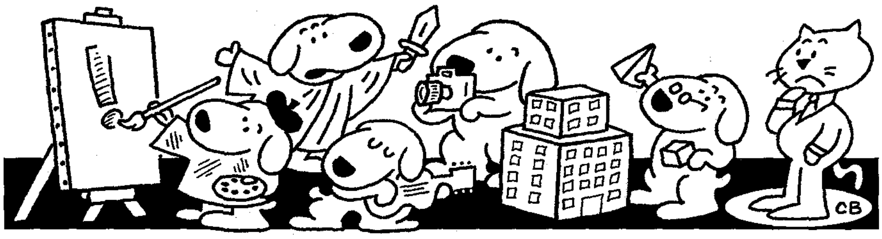

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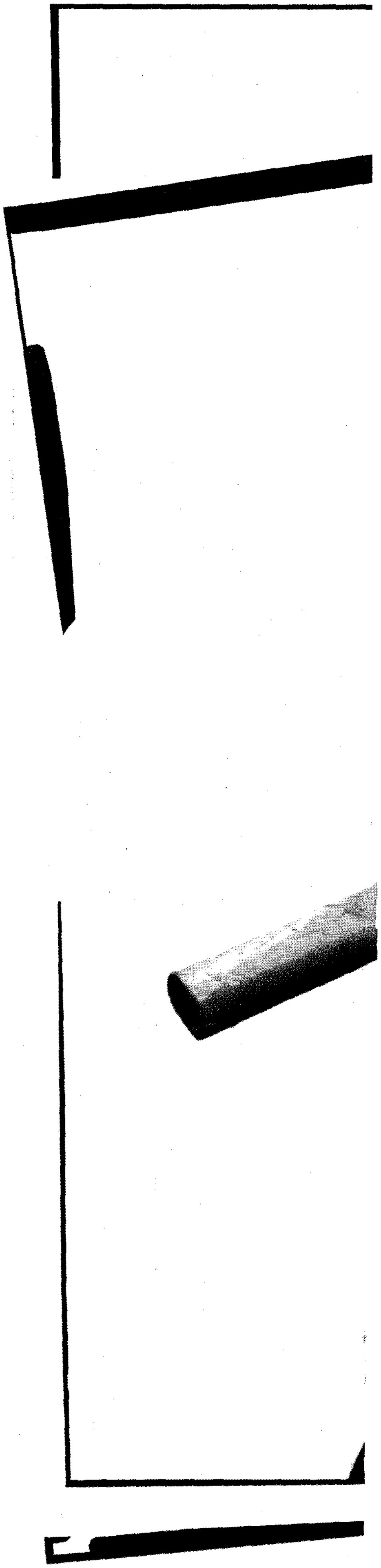
A new biography looks at Groucho's inner life.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

By now, the pundits agree, with slightly Marxian logic, that almost everything we think of as having taken place in the sixties, from the sexual revolution on up, actually took place in the seventies, and nothing more surely than the renaissance of the Marx Brothers themselves. The Marxes were too violent and acerbic for the true flower-power period; it is W. C. Fields and Lewis Carroll, not Groucho, who decorate the cover of "Sgt. Pepper's." Not until the bleak winter of the early seventies, when politics became as hard-edged as the brothers' comedy, did they emerge as heroes of the counterculture. "Duck Soup," which Pauline Kael around that time called "their greatest movie—a semi-surrealist farce about war," must have been the most frequently screened film at college film societies in America, at a time when what college film societies screened mattered. And the re-release of "Animal Crackers," in 1974, filled even first-run theatres in New York. Chaplin's great features were re-released around the same time, but they already belonged to the archival past. The Marx Brothers were part of the time; books that, in that pre-video period, offered simply captioned stills from their movies were best-sellers.

The revival of the Marxes focussed, of course, on Groucho, in part because he was the only living performer—if you don't count Zeppo, and even Zeppo didn't count Zeppo—but mostly because he embodied what everyone saw as the Marx Brothers' red-pepper, revolutionary content, their nihilistic absurdism: the contempt for authority, verbal aggression for its own sake, the surrealist non-non-sequiturs. The Groucho cult culminated in a sold-out 1972 Carnegie Hall concert, at which the then eighty-two-year-old man just talked and sang for a couple of hours.

This is where Stefan Kanfer begins his fine, heartrending new biography, "Groucho: The Life and Times of Julius Henry Marx" (Knopf; $30). He recalls the concert as less an epiphany than a sad, even painful event. Groucho was an old man, with an old man's infirmities. "Arthritis and small strokes have made his missteps a parody of the old choreography, and his rheumy eyes can barely decipher the cue cards," Kanfer writes. Although Kanfer allows that Groucho picked up confidence as the concert went on, when "the house lights are turned up, there remains a melancholy undertow to this unprecedented evening of laughter and memories." This undertow tugs its way through the book and, in fact, the whole of Groucho's life, which, as his biographer sees it, was relentlessly unhappy. A biography that surely was conceived (back in those same excited seventies, Kanfer tells us in an acknowledgment) as a romp and a celebration ends as a lament: once again, a biographer's hero turns out to have not



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Groucho Marx in Beverly Hills, April 9, 1972.

only feet of clay but a heart of thorns and a mouth filled with bile. Kanfer, a novelist and longtime critic for *Time*, and himself a very witty writer, seems to have repressed his own humor in writing this book, partly out of deference—only a fool would trade jokes with a master—but mostly, it seems, because the whole subject now just gets him down. His verdict is that the persona of the hostile comic "unhappily agreed with the man: living with Groucho Marx had been no pleasure, for his wives, his children—or himself."

The biographer has been there, and we haven't, but Kanfer's own telling suggests that there may be a more cheerful way of seeing the story. As one who listened to a recording of that 1972 performance over and over, I recall that the really startling thing about it was not Groucho's frailty—this was, after all, an eighty-two-year-old man—but his surprising ordinariness. He wasn't Tristan Tzara's spiritual brother or Franz Kafka's American cousin. He was your uncle Julius, a fan of Milton Berle's and a friend of Georgie Jessel's, full of Irving Berlin songs and vaudeville stories. He told after-dinner anecdotes about Jolson and forgotten turn-of-the-century newspaper critics and made mildly smutty jokes of the kind your grandfather would make on a Sunday morning when your grandmother wasn't around. What seemed odd, in other words, was how pliant a creature Groucho was, far less domineering and sure than his movie (and even television) character suggested.

This was an actor's pliancy, the kind of self-doubt that made Olivier, around the same time, when he was collecting *his* lifetime-achievement awards, resort to mock-Prospero orations. And, in the end, the life of Groucho seems not so much mean or miserable as hollow, lacking in the confidence and energy that he projected so sharply on the screen. To the normal psychological miseries of the funnyman was added an almost mythological dilemma: although Groucho thought up the outlines of his own character, it was filled in by first-rate writers, George S. Kaufman and S. J. Perelman in particular. The finished character was a kind of Platonic image of a new type of New York Jewish wit, but it was too demanding a creation for Groucho to keep alive himself without regular polishing from other writers. The story is less Pygmalion and Galatea (with S. J. Perelman as the sculptor and Groucho as the coy, crouching ivory) than an animated version of one of those Escher drawings where one hand draws the other hand drawing the other hand, etc., until, in this case, the two hands start grabbing each other's wrists and fighting over which hand is real.

Groucho Marx was a middle child. This sounds like a Woody Allen line, but it is a fact, and seems to have been a determining one. He was the third of five brothers, plumped right between two charismatic olders, Leonard, who became Chico, and Adolph, who became Harpo (and later changed his name to Arthur to avoid being confused with Hitler, not, one would have thought, a high-probability event), and two eager, intimidated youngers, Herbert and Milton, or Zeppo and Gummo. (The names were given in later years by a fellow-vaudevillian; Groucho hated his.)

Middle children in big families become unduly fastidious, especially if they are surrounded by arrogant, self-confident older siblings, and Groucho was no exception. He was intelligent, withdrawn, and bookish, building a haven of pulp literature for himself in a world dominated by his pushy, slightly hysterical mother, Minnie, and his brilliant, overbearing brother Leonard. His mother, a plain speaker, called him *der Eifersüchtige*, the jealous one. (That's German, by the way, not Yiddish: the Marxes were uptown, East Ninety-third Street, Yorkville Jews, and, on the father's side, Alsatian-French, a rare breed in New York. Marx *père* was a terrific cook; his sons called him Frenchy.) Julius dreamed of being a doctor, but his mother dreamed of nothing but show business.

Although Kanfer presumably did not set out to write a revisionist biography, this one does revise the standard history, as it has been presented in the brothers' own memoirs and hardened by the 1970 Broadway musical "Minnie's Boys." The legend has the Marxes created by the domineering Minnie, who threw her five sons out into vaudeville when they were still in their teens, spotting each one's gift and, goddesslike, divining what implement he needed and giving it to him: Leonard the piano, Adolph the harp, and so on. (Julius was sent out at fifteen to become a boy singer, with bookings in Michigan and Colorado.) Kanfer makes a convincing case that Minnie was neither more nor less useful than any other stage mom, and that it was Minnie's brother Al Shean, at the time one of the most successful comedians in vaudeville, who, arriving from time to time as a kind of muse ex machina, gave his nephews' act shape and point.

More important, Kanfer establishes that Julius/Groucho's inner life, and a lot of his style, was shaped by an abiding distaste, bordering at times on loathing, for his older brother Leonard/Chico. (Adolph he seems to have regarded as hors de combat, too dim and then too remote to matter.) Today, we tend to watch right past Chico in the movies, with an affectionate feeling for his terrible "Italian" accent and his unpretentious brazenness as a performer, while we wait for the two geniuses, Harpo and Groucho, to do their things. Offstage, though, Chico was the real power in the family, as oldest brothers are—adored by his mother and feared by his father—and the real burden in Julius/Groucho's life. He was also utterly irresponsible in a way that seems happy-go-lucky only if it isn't you who depends on him. It was Leonard who made the deals, negotiated with the managers, and, not least, got all the girls. He mistreated the girls and gambled away the money, leaving his more talented and less self-confident brothers to bail him out with new shows and movies. Those looks of weary, long-suffering misery that Groucho sends Chico's way throughout the movies turn out to have been the most psychologically authentic thing in the act.

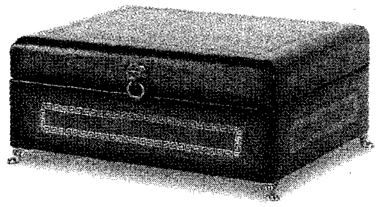
Given that the circumstances were so unpromising—Groucho didn't really want to be in show business; Harpo didn't have the focus to do much of anything; and Chico would have been just as glad to front a flea circus if it paid—how is it that they got so good? And not just good but original. They spent a decade on the road, mostly in the sticks. (Kanfer supplies an unforgettable image of Groucho encountering a young, shy Charlie Chaplin in a whorehouse in Salt Lake City and urging him to take a movie offer from Mack Sennett.) In 1924, the Marxes came home to New York for good, with a disorderly revue called "I'll Say She Is," which no one, least of all the brothers, really expected to work. The whole setup of the act seemed to defy conventional show-biz comic logic. No fat-man, thin-man duos, not even a straight man and a funny man. Instead, we have a machine-gun-talking lecturer with a lope and a greasepaint mustache; an Italian-American in a dunce cap; and a mute man-child in a top hat and a red wig, each of whom interacts with the others only long enough to baffle them. (Aside from the famous mirror bit in "Duck Soup," Groucho and Harpo have hardly a moment together in the entire canon.) So what did happen in all that time on the road, in Nacogdoches, Texas, and Flin Flon, Manitoba?

Kanfer paints a convincing picture of inspiration-by-accident-of-ethnic-impersonation. After early attempts to make it as a singing act failed, the brothers became dialect comedians—with Chico landing on the Italian role he never abandoned (or improved) and Harpo becoming an "Irish" comic (that's why he wears the bright-red wig). All young vaudeville performers did dialect humor for the same reason, and in the same way, that all first-time rock bands play power chords: it was the easiest thing you could do that the audience was sure to recognize as entertainment.

Making the rounds of four-a-day vaudeville, the brothers turned accents into characters. Harpo, at Uncle Al's wise insistence, kept the "Irish" getup but dropped the accent, and then stopped speaking entirely. (A mute Irishman—a funny idea in itself.) Groucho was first a German comic, and then, when the First World War broke out, what was called, unpejoratively, a Jew comic. (Even at the Carnegie Hall concert, he sang one song in each accent.) A German comic, in that period, was voluble, enthusiastic, and a little dumb; a Jew comic was pessimistic, self-mocking, and spoke with a heavy Yiddish accent. Basically, the evolution of Groucho's character—and what was new in it—involved dropping the Yiddish accent while keeping the Jew character, and making him much younger: a rising man rather than a sadly settled one. He added the loping, evasive walk and, later, the enormous greasepaint mustache and the enormous painted eyebrows, which enabled him to communicate ironically with a big theatre audience—to comment on the jokes even as he made them. (The heavy black wool suit he wore was the uniform of smart Jewish boys well into the nineteen-fifties; part of the implicit joke is that Groucho is a young man pretending to be an old one, a brash kid pretending to be a mangy Lothario.)

Although the mask was pure Kabuki, the voice was the straight dope, the first honest representation of a New York Jewish accent in show business. Groucho spoke fast, and also far more softly than we remember, with all the "r"s lost and the "ur"s turned to "oi"s (in "Animal Crackers," to lovebirds searching for a stolen, and priceless, Bogard painting: "Bogard is dead? Then it's moider!"). Before the good writers got to him, Groucho's comedy wasn't really any more sophisticated than anybody else's—"Every man has qualms, even if they are only steamed qualms" was about as good as it got—but it was, and remained, far more verbal. He talked like a second-generation Jew, an immigrant's wised-up kid, not an immigrant. His style was witty even before he was.

There's a streamlined, black-and-white, Covarrubias caricature quality to Groucho's style and appearance, a sly, fearless self-confidence. He found his style in the twenties, and there remained something of twenties jauntiness and self-confidence even in his television quiz show. It's a style that's based on mastering a familiar language, musical or purely verbal, and then making it your own just by speeding it up. And though his chronological age brings him closer to Irving Berlin, he belongs spiritually to the Gershwin generation. Listening to Gershwin piano rolls, we're startled by how fast he rushes through the ballads; listening to Groucho in "Animal Crackers," we're amazed that anyone could follow him, so accelerated are the jokes. "Hurray for Captain Spaulding, the African Explorer!" the chorus sings. "Did someone call me shnorrer?" Groucho quickly demands. The interpolation of



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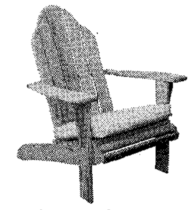

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the Yiddish word is, in its comic way, as resonant a moment as the first clarinet slide in "Rhapsody in Blue"—Jewish, bluish, and American, all at once. (There are wonderful film clips of Gershwin dressed up as Groucho for a costume party; you can't tell them apart.)

"I'll Say She Is" shocked everyone by getting money notices, particularly from the mannered, immensely influential Alexander Woollcott—although it was Harpo, not Groucho, who got the bulk of the adulation—and launched the brothers as the last thing they had expected to become: Broadway revue stars. Groucho's style, as it was seen in raw form in "I'll Say She Is," came as a revelation and an opportunity for a generation of New York writers—a kind of high-definition, popular vehicle for Algonquin wit. The only real equivalent in American comedy was Sid Caesar's emergence as the perfect vehicle for Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Neil Simon, et al. In both cases, a generation of funny writers found the perfect funnyman, who was at once infinitely more gifted than they were at putting the words over, and infinitely less gifted than they were at making the words up—a formula for a brief season of great comedy and a lifetime of hurt feelings.

George S. Kaufman is generally credited with having supplied the words for Groucho's music in the first two legit plays the brothers performed—"The Cocoanuts," in 1925, and "Animal Crackers," three years later—though in fact he co-wrote most of his Marx Brothers material with Morrie Ryskind, not a negligible figure. Kaufman, like Groucho, was a fastidious man (that insistent initial!) from an immigrant background, who had also come to reading as the least messy of all activities, and loved English literature while feeling a little uneasy in its presence, clinging to the margins of the Broadway comedy and the comic essay. Kaufman even looked like Groucho, so that, eerily, Groucho was denying having been influenced by Kaufman even before the playwright had written a line for him. (He wrote a letter to a drama critic saying that he had not copied his look from Kaufman: "I have seen a number of his plays, and I am not sure whether he has a moustache or not, although some authors find it advisable to wear something on the opening night.") He carried on about this throughout his life. "I was in show business for twenty years when 'The Cocoanuts' opened," he pointed out in old age, "and I'd been walking and talking for at least thirty-three years, so the evolution had gone on for quite some time before I met Kaufman." But he added, "He was the wittiest man I ever knew."

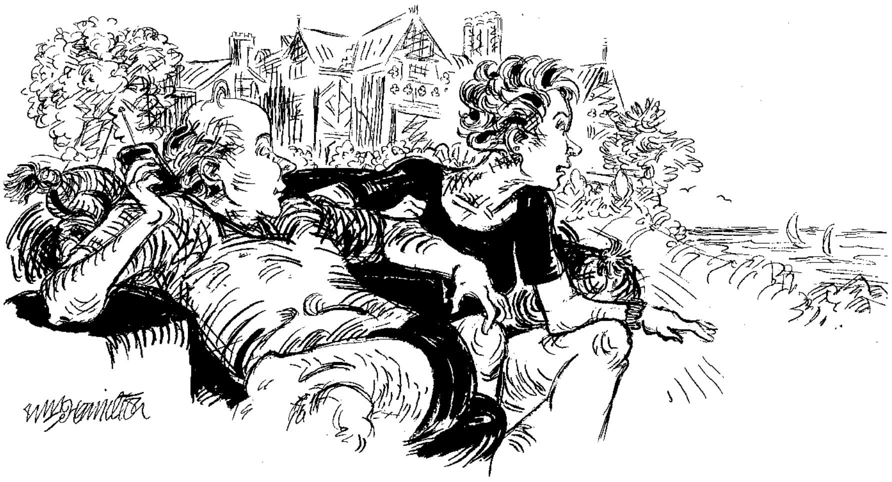
What Kaufman wrote for Groucho was a new kind of genuinely inspired nonsense—pure abstract comedy, which drew on the clichés of cheap romantic fiction and melodrama as effectively as Lewis Carroll had drawn on the clichés of cheap moralizing Victorian verse. Groucho to the long-suffering dowager Margaret Dumont, in "The Cocoanuts": "Well, say that you'll be truly mine, or truly yours, or yours truly. . . . Tonight when the moon is sneaking around the clouds, I'll be sneaking around you. I'll meet you tonight under the moon. Oh, I can see you now, you and the moon. You wear a red necktie so I'll know you."

Kanfer approvingly quotes an academic who argues that Groucho's style, as refined by Kaufman, was distinguished above all by its aggression, its raw hostility to the audience, but it is possible to have some steamed qualms about this analysis. Groucho is insulting at times, but he is never an insult comedian, in the manner of Jack E. Leonard or Don Rickles. The insult comedian wants to get a rise out of his victim; Margaret Dumont and Chico and the others just stand there. (As Groucho urges her to wear that necktie, Dumont crosses her hands and flutters, complimented and lost.) He's so brilliantly allusive that his victims don't even know they're being insulted. He talks past them, to us. Groucho is aggressive and even hostile, yes, but only in the boned and defanged manner of the big talker, hostile the way intellectuals are: "You're too dim to get it." Groucho, like a critic, has no power save that of his mouth-speed and his allusions. As Kanfer says, his style is simple: he says something and then he says something about it. ("One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas I don't know.")

When the producers of the Marxes' first movie tried to get Groucho to replace the greasepaint mustache with a more plausible, stick-on one, because the audience wouldn't "believe" in anything that phony, Groucho replied, sharply, "The audience doesn't believe in us anyhow. They just laugh at us." He understood intuitively, and against the normal comic grain, that his style depended on his being a representation not of the "human condition," like Chaplin and Keaton, but of the talking condition—pure reason with a greasepaint mustache, supplying its own critique.

Groucho's relationship with Kaufman was always at least respectful; in some ways, Kaufman was, and would remain, as big a star as Groucho himself, a member of the Algonquin circle and the author of one hit play after another (although none were remotely as good as his writing for Groucho, the perfect mouthpiece). Groucho's relationship with S. J. Perelman, who wrote the first two movies that the Marxes made after they moved to Hollywood, in 1931, remained fraught, cruel in a way that would become a Groucho signature. Although Perelman's work was amended and altered by various Marx hangers-on, his touch is audible everywhere in "Monkey Business" and "Horse Feathers." (Groucho, playing a college president, is told that "the Dean is furious. He's waxing wroth!" He says, "Is Roth out there, too? Tell Roth to wax the Dean for a while.")

To many ears, the Perelman-Groucho collaboration remains the high-water mark of talking comedy, and it's depressing to learn how little the two men liked each other. In a famous incident, Perelman read the entire script of "Monkey Business" to the brothers. Harpo and Chico fell asleep, and Groucho didn't stir till the end, when he announced, "It stinks." (The next day, Perelman allows, Groucho reversed himself.) Kanfer sees that Perelman, a prose writer rather than a dramatist, was unused to a veteran comedian's attitude toward comedy—it was part of his professional pride never to laugh at anything; that was the audience's job. He also notes that Groucho, faced with someone like Perelman, who had been to college, was just as insecure as the writer was. In any case, Perelman remained an essentially hostile witness to Groucho's life. "As far as their temperaments and their personalities were concerned," he wrote years later, "the Marx Brothers were capricious, tricky beyond endurance, altogether unreliable, and treacherous to a degree that would make Machiavelli absolutely kneel at their feet."



"I just hope we last long enough to get a turn at despising some new people ourselves."

• •

Who's to decide, when comic geniuses disagree? With Perelman, Groucho began a lifelong habit of abusing and disparaging his writers, even as he grew more and more dependent on them, and it was no longer Kaufman and Perelman but Mac Benoff and Irving Brecher who were making up the jokes. The relationship between writers and comedians is an almost taboo subject; we like to think that comedians have created themselves, and are a little shocked when we discover that what they do is scripted. Yet, as Kanfer shows, even Groucho's famous gift for ad-libbing turns out to have been a veteran vaudevillian's querulous worrying a line to death, rather than inspired improvisation. (Although Kanfer has dug hard, he hasn't come up with much in the way of new anecdotes or even snappy answers. We trot by the famous ones—"I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member"—but beyond that the pickings are slim.)

Groucho, in his iconic cartoon outlines, seems to have leaped fully armed from the head of Thalia, and his dependence on his writers seems somehow to diminish the glory of his character. When Margaret Dumont says to Groucho, as Rufus T. Firefly, Leader of Freedonia, "This is a gala day for you," and he replies, "A gal a day is enough for me. I don't think I could handle any more," we somehow want it to be *true*, just what he said, not what Kalmar and Ruby wrote for him to say.

Why do we want this? Nobody regards, say, Sinatra as a lesser singer because he had Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen to write the songs. Perhaps it is because a lot of us fall in love with the great comedians when we are adolescent. We develop passionate crushes on them because they have a wholeness and sureness of response to the injustices of the world which we can only envy. We go to comedy to fulfill a dream of running the world with our tongues, our wit (even a vulgarian like Howard Stern embodies this dream for his audience). At thirteen, we do not want Lords of Misrule to submit to rules, or to buy their anarchy from Irving Brecher. (The moment our connection to popular music became adolescent and retaliative, too—with Dylan and Lennon—it became a reproach to the singer if he didn't write his own songs.)

"Duck Soup" is generally taken as the pinnacle of early Marx Brothers comedy, but I will confess, heretically, that its dependence on relatively crude physical comedy—the slow burns of Edgar Kennedy, even the famous, overlong mirror scene—makes it, for me, less invigorating and fresh than the Perelman comedies. After "Duck Soup," the Marxes got a couple of big hits out of Irving Thalberg's degrading, inspired transformation of their act into a standard, wholesome M-G-M family entertainment, with the brothers recast as zany madcaps on the side of a pair of singing lovers, God help us. But the Thalberg formula really worked only once: the Kaufman-written "A Night at the Opera" (1935) was followed mainly by lame repetitions, though even the lamest had wonderful moments. "A Day at the Races," for instance, the sequel to "Opera," put Groucho alongside the matchlessly beautiful young Maureen O'Sullivan. Groucho tried for her, but didn't get her, because, she recalls, "his life was his jokes."

Groucho was mean to his writers, and he was also, according to Kanfer, mean to his wives and kids. He had three wives, all Gentile, all confused by his abuse; two of them ended up as "problem" drinkers. (So did his daughter, Miriam.) Kanfer puts this down, gallantly, to the abuse that Groucho ladled out. Even as they tried to please him, the cruel jokes kept coming: a plate of green beans could not be placed on the table, apparently, without Groucho's demanding "Where did you get this recipe, the Concentration Camp Cookbook?" Exit wife, weeping. Kanfer theorizes that this meanness was rooted in Groucho's resentment of his mother and, generally, in his inability to leave the hostility of his humor onstage. But, without wanting to excuse him, one might add as an anthropological note that *all* the Uncle Juliuses of Groucho's generation cracked jokes like this at the table, and anyone who has been around them knows that when Uncle Julius made the crack about the Concentration Camp Cookbook, at some level he genuinely meant it as a joke, a "tease," and would have been surprised and disappointed if the teasee didn't get it.

Writers, wives, and, eventually, brothers. As the thirties wore on, and Chico became more and more unreliable, Groucho came to resent him to an almost murderous degree. In 1941, Groucho split up the Marx Brothers. "What happened to us is that we were defeated by our own specialty," he told a reporter, as his brothers listened mutely. "The fake mustache, the dumb harp player, and the little guy who chased the ladies, all were funny at first. But it became successively harder with each picture to top the one before. We couldn't get out of the groove without getting out of the movies. So we decided to get all the way out." This would cause, Groucho allowed brutally—the brothers were right there as he spoke—"a certain amount of sadness. But everything passes, sadness included. Anyhow, I prefer never to work again than to make another Marx Brothers picture."

The amazing thing was that, after breaking away from his brothers, he did find a second, more subdued style, and became an even bigger star. Kanfer relates the complicated, contingent circumstances that led to the launch, on the radio, of Groucho's quiz show, "You Bet Your Life," which would become an American staple—four years on radio and eleven on television. He gave up the greasepaint mustache for a real one, and calmed down his style accordingly. The show, which pretended to be ad-libbed but was scripted and orchestrated to within an inch of its life, gave Groucho a whole new audience and, ironically, consolidated his reputation as an improvisational genius. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* had him on the cover, putting him in the pantheon as the master of the snappy reply. (Woman contestant: "I've been married for thirty-one years to the same man." Groucho: "If he's been married for thirty-one years, he's not the same man.")

And still he wasn't happy? Well, no. Hard as it is to believe, Groucho felt compelled to prove himself as a writer, but his one Broadway play, a formulaic middlebrow piece called "Time for Elizabeth," flopped, and his books, though more successful, rode on the back of the success of his TV show. A collection called "The Groucho Letters," mail sent and received, actually made the best-seller list, but any reader would have noted that the funniest letters came from Groucho's friends—Fred Allen, Nunnally Johnson—who were professional comedy writers, the ventriloquists humoring their dummy.

His reputation rose as his spirits sank. In the mid-sixties, he went off to London to have dinner with T. S. Eliot, who had written to him asking for an autographed picture, and he made regular rounds of the celebrity talk shows. Kanfer is a bit hard on his last companion, the ambitious Erin Fleming, for pushing Groucho to make those concert appearances, but, given that his life was his jokes, was this so wrong? In any case, the Groucho of those last performances wasn't senile, just old and shaky.

Curiously, the real-hair-mustache Groucho of the quiz show is more evident today than the earlier, inspired one. Before Johnny Carson began his thirty-year reign at the "Tonight Show," Groucho was one of the guest hosts who kept his seat warm for him, and late, real-mustache Groucho leads not just into Carson but into Letterman. He was the original type of the ironic television host—cool rather than warm, counter-punching rather than truly aggressive.

It is the early Groucho, though, who matters most, and, invented by writers, he remains a literary presence. Writers, from Peter De Vries to the Portnoy-period Philip Roth, like to daydream about being Groucho the way playground basketball players daydream about being Michael Jordan; it would make life so easy, having it all right on tap. That he didn't, really—that no one does, that every step and move and line always has to be worked on and worked out—doesn't lessen the appeal of the fantasy. Yet the costs of being forced into the poet's—or clown's—corner! A good play, in the Stoppard-Frayn literary mannerist mode, might be made out of that Marx-Eliot summit, fluidly flashing back to the Chaplin-Marx meeting in the Salt Lake City whorehouse. The encounter of two bookish, insecure American boys of the same generation sums up, after all, the two essential movements of modern culture: on the one hand, the forced growth of an avant-garde art that took over the old high culture and remade it in nervous, purposefully fragmentary form, and, on the other, the natural growth of a commercial popular culture that, in its own accidentally nervous and fragmentary forms, could occasionally rival and make envious the high priests of the avant-garde.

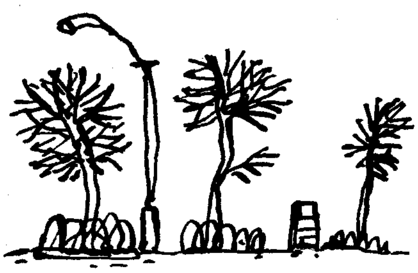
If Groucho belongs now to literature, could we at least claim a little, happier piece of him as a local hero? There is no sign at 179 East Ninety-third Street announcing that this was where the Marx Brothers spent their childhood, where one of the crucial New York voices was beautifully found (and another crucial New York voice, Harpo's, just as beautifully lost). Someone stick a plaque up there, and soon. Now, that would be a gala day, enough for any man. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Vision of Emma Blau, *by Ursula Hegi (Simon & Schuster; $25).* Beset by shiny visions of America, Stefan Blau, the patriarch of Hegi's absorbing fifth novel, leaves his small town in Germany to seek his fortune, and he builds it in the form of an opulent apartment house, the Wasserburg, on the shores of Lake Winnipesaukee. Hegi is a pointillist, and she's hard at work here filling in the details: the gleaming elevator and splendid carpets; Stefan's three wives; the Identi-Kits of his children (Tobias is gay, Greta, a healer, marries a priest, Robert is a bulimic veterinarian). But by the time the saga gets to the third generation of Blaus—Emma, who's obsessed by her grandfather's legacy, and her brother Caleb, who couldn't care less—the story, like Stefan's *Schloss*, starts to sag under its own weight.

The Barbarians Are Coming, *by David Wong Louie (Putnam; $23.95).* Louie's first novel is an antic comedy of ethnic identity: its narrator, Sterling Lung, is a twenty-six-year-old Chinese-American chef who not only specializes in French cuisine and cooks for a Wasp ladies' club but forsakes the Hong Kong picture bride his parents have chosen for him in order to marry a Jewish American princess. The story, however, is far less cartoonish than it sounds. Louie puts Sterling's sensual apprehension front and center, writing in a voluptuous prose that complicates his predicaments. The result is an anatomy of familial relationships and obligations which pays off in unexpectedly moving ways.

The Nature of Economies, *by Jane Jacobs (Modern Library; $21.95).* Jacobs's "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," published in 1961, has fundamentally changed our concepts of city planning, and in her succeeding books she has continued to test common beliefs against common experience. Here she turns to natural and social science to support her argument that economies, like ecologies, are webs of interdependence that flourish (or fail) for the same reasons. Throughout, Jacobs conveys simultaneously a sense of discovery and a sense of recognition. Although she uses the same form she did in "Systems of Survival"—an invented discussion among a group of fictional friends—the book's intellectual excitement compensates for this irritating device.



The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *edited by Christopher Looby (Chicago; $35).* Higginson earned his place in American letters by encouraging Emily Dickinson and helping publish her poems; at the time, he, not she, was the literary lion. As a militant abolitionist, he felt morally obliged to volunteer when the Civil War broke out, and in 1862 he accepted command of a regiment of runaway slaves stationed in South Carolina. Higginson's journal offers vivid portraits of settings, people, and experiences that were exotic to a New Englander who had once been a minister. The combination of his boyish pride in his men and his paternal condescension may be old-fashioned, but his optimism is cheering even at this late date.

Journey of the Pink Dolphins, *by Sy Montgomery (Simon & Schuster; $26).* The pink river dolphins of the Amazon are said to seduce humans and take them to the underwater city of the Encante. Montgomery, with her photographer, Dianne Taylor-Snow, endures every imaginable discomfort—from chiggers and snakes to observation platforms menaced by birds with claws on their wings—to swim with the *boto*, as the creature is called in Brazil, and she returns to tell the tale. The dolphins look you right in the eye, as does the author. Her dealings with all the denizens of the rain forest—including a captive she-turtle whose freedom she longs to buy—are searching and personal.

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THE ART WORLD

STERN BEAUTY

How Fairfield Porter reinvented realism.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Fairfield Porter, the realist painter, art critic, and heroic eccentric, who died in 1975 at the age of sixty-eight, will be acknowledged as a major twentieth-century artist when we can figure out how. It's a tall order. To start with, there is the problem of who "we" is. Sheltering under the pronoun would have to be both archconservatives like the critic Hilton Kramer, who has long wielded the cause of Porter as a battle flag against pretty much all contemporary taste in art, and more bohemian types, like the members of the New York School of poets, who were Porter's friends, inspirations, and, sometimes, lovers. These mismatched parties have set the public tone for Porter fandom so far. Our institutional and academic establishments hardly know what to do with this apparently anachronistic painter of summer landscapes and domestic idylls, and so have regularly chosen to do nothing at all. As for a general public that might be expected to enjoy beautiful realism, it is not apt to relish the serious aestheticism—valuing the execution of an image over the image itself—which Porter shared with his hero and friend Willem de Kooning. Porter was no populist.

This leaves me and you, unprejudiced reader, to cope with a succinct exhibition, at the Equitable Tower's AXA Gallery, of more than forty mostly first-rate Porter paintings, accompanied by rich documentary and explanatory material. The show, which will run through May 27th, was curated by the writer Justin Spring, whose unsparing new biography, "Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art" (Yale; $35), demonstrates that this artist was, at the very least, one of the great American characters, a patrician Midwesterner who was devoted to simple joys with the bedevilled intensity of an inward pilgrim in a nineteenth-century Russian novel. (Porter's youthful illustrations of Dostoyevsky's "The Possessed" call to mind, as prefigurements of a life, those made by Balthus of "Wuthering Heights.") Spring's biography complements an even more important book, which was published in 1979 and is still available in paperback. "Art in Its Own Terms: Selected Criticism, 1935-1975," edited by Rackstraw Downes, installs Porter, who wrote for *Artnews* and *The Nation*, among the best art critics of any nationality. Like his painting, Porter's criticism improbably mingles French-flavored hedonism and Yankee starch. Here's a sample: "It may be that to separate pleasure from an object is too hard a thing to do, and that abstract pleasure, like abstract taste or abstract love, is not for ordinary mortals." For Porter, the ordinary was an urgent ideal.

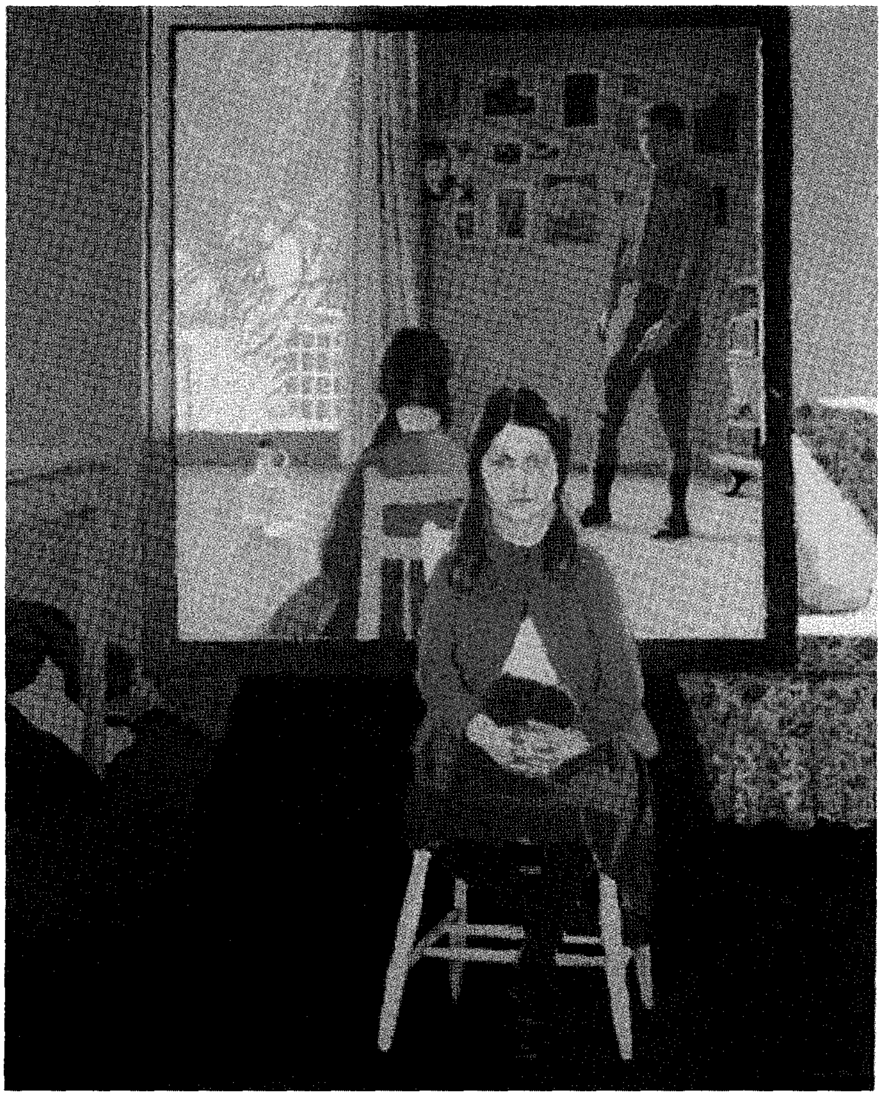
Porter was born real-estate rich in a suburb of Chicago to a family that had deep roots in New England. His gloomy father was a frustrated architect, his dazzling mother a lifelong amateur in social causes and cultural uplift. He was an indifferent student at Harvard, where he took art history with Arthur Pope and philosophy with Alfred North Whitehead. In 1927, he travelled to Moscow, where he had his first exposure to the paintings of Vuillard and Bonnard, and an audience with Leon Trotsky, who allowed Porter to sketch him. A few years later, in Italy, he was welcomed to I Tatti by Bernard Berenson, to whom he had been introduced by another wealthy young Harvard man, the budding curator John Walker. Settling in New York, he became embroiled in radical politics and painted a mural, now lost, entitled "Turn Imperialist War Into Civil War." He married the necessarily resilient Anne Channing—a poet and, in the amused words of Porter's mother, "a nymph in the drawing room"—with whom he had five children. From 1949 on, they maintained warmly dishevelled households in Southampton and, during the summer, on an island in Maine. After the Second World War, which Porter spent working as a draftsman for an industrial designer, he became an odd but accepted presence in the art culture that centered on Abstract Expressionism.

I visited the Porters more than once at their rambling old Southampton house. People dropped in frequently, and one of them, the seraphically gifted and mentally shaky poet James Schuyler, stayed on for twelve years. Porter was a gawky, boyishly eager man, forever wrestling with his work and his latest ideas—which, at the time, involved views on the rational superiority of artistic over scientific perceptions of reality. He had no small talk. His abrupt intimacies could take one aback. A favorite topic was his ongoing quarrel about religion with Anne, a Catholic convert. But I wouldn't have minded lingering indefinitely in that vibrant ménage. In Porter's studio I observed the progress of a large, not very successful painting of a lawn party, "July" (1971), that is in the Equitable show. He complained about the trouble he was having with it. "I'm so clumsy!" he moaned. In truth, big pictures had to be an ordeal for him, because he composed with locally intense colors and tonal modulations rather than with an over-all linear design. In "July," the task of making the brightness of the foreground and the sky interact across expanses of huge, dark spruce trees posed an almost masochistic challenge. One desperate expedient—a faint fog of atmospheric light dragged across the spruces—makes me smile today, as I recall a painter of leisure for whom nearly nothing came easily.

But smallish landscapes and still-lifes often did come readily amid Porter's struggles, as light lifting will to one who has been hefting boulders. I got the impression that he was a bit ashamed of the fluent, startling loveliness of his seafront meadows and his tabletop flowers and breakfast dishes, but they remain amazing stylistic feats. Nothing else in previous art truly resembles them, despite their thousands of cousins in a French line going back through Matisse and Bonnard to Watteau and Chardin. Porter reinvented conventional genres in two keys simultaneously: realist and, for lack of a better word, per-

NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF ENID AND CROSBY KEMPER FOUNDATION

formative. He subjected the decayed legacy of Post-Impressionist color harmonies to corrective discipline, making it deliver hard information on observed light and shadow. At the same time, learning from de Kooning, he recentered painting in the freighted, purposeful stroke—a gesture that can unclench color, tone, contour, speed, and, in short, everything needful at once. Porter was no conservative in style but, rather, the advanced proponent of a tradition that, except for him, scarcely existed any longer. It was as if he lived in an alternate world with an alternate history, which, defiantly, he really did.



Porter's intricate composition "The Mirror" (1966) pays homage to Velázquez in a work that transcends pastiche and combines painterly hedonism and Yankee starch.

Porter preached the crackpot theory that modern painting had taken a disastrous turn when, led by the Cubists, it opted for the cerebral implications of Cézanne's anxious, fragmentary manner over Vuillard and Bonnard's passionate absorption in the visual realities of daily life. What made the idea weird was Porter's apparent belief that he could simply ignore that unfortunate revolution, as one might smooth over a friend's gaffe at a party. He chose to proceed as if the bourgeois intimists—not Picasso and Mondrian—were the dominant figures of the recent past, the ones to be followed and surpassed. His table-turning logic smacked of Marxist dialectics—like the far more influential but also arbitrary system of his contemporary and ideological enemy, the critic Clement Greenberg. Think of this when you look at Porter's paintings: there is mad, glinting intellectual steel beneath the empirical, sensuous painterly flesh. A stern beauty results. If, in the work's presence, you try to argue its conviction down, you will have your own eyes and heart as antagonists. I predict that a bizarre sense, via Porter, of fully inhabiting a parallel or shadow twentieth century will appeal to more and more people as time goes by.

It is an interesting stretch, certainly, to conceive of Porter's magnificent "The Mirror" as a landmark painting of 1966, when Pop art and Minimalism ruled the art world and all hell had broken loose in society at large. Be it noted that Porter stayed leftist in politics and, as a critic, wrote signal appreciations of Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns and, in conversation, spoke admiringly of Brice Marden. Never reactionary, Porter insisted only on negotiating the world of chaotic change in his own way. An homage to Velázquez that transcends pastiche, "The Mirror" poses Porter's young daughter Elizabeth before a mirror that reflects himself with brush in hand and, outside the studio window, a white house and an autumnal tree. Polarized tones and dominant blacks, reds, and yellows—recalling Porter's remark, in one of his reviews, "The German flag colors seem to have crept into everything painted around 1914"—give heraldic punch to a gentle vignette. The girl's eyes are a miracle. Porter often had difficulty with eyes (as he did with people), either exasperatedly blurring them or unwisely presuming to render their gaze. (Pure paint, which is his real pictorial space, is not an element that anyone can credibly peer out from.) Caught between outward and inward contemplation, Elizabeth's eyes merge with the painted surface. Their non-expression anchors her in the painting—and anchors the painting in Porter's capacious and complicated sense of life. ♦

From a course listing for Westchester Community College.

The following are just a sample of works which will be studied: J. Alfred Profruck's "The Love Song," Allen Ginsberg's "Poem Rocked," Elie Weisel's "Night," and Seamus Heaney's "Casualty."

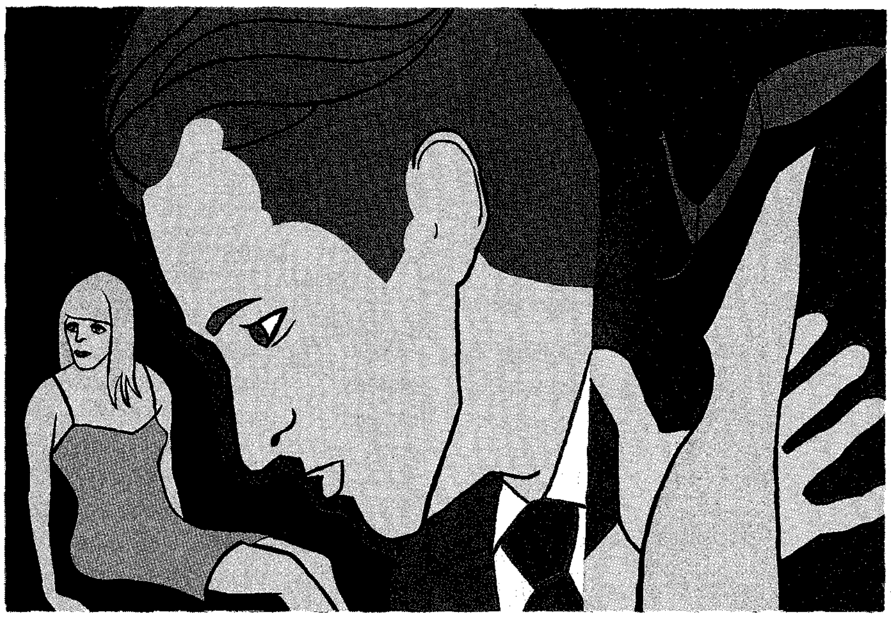
The class will also feature mermaids singing, each to each.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

TO THE LIMIT

"American Psycho" explores the netherworld of the nineteen-eighties.

BY ANTHONY LANE



Patrick Bateman, fifty-per-cent machine: "I'm into murders and executions."

The scariest thing about "American Psycho," Mary Harron's steely adaptation of the Bret Easton Ellis novel, is not the film itself; it is the sight that confronted me as I left the theatre. There, at the end of a row, oblivious of the moviegoers stumbling past in varying states of shock, was a couple necking. Soon they would disconnect their lips and go to dinner—somewhere romantic, with a good steak tartare and a curranty Côte Rôtie. Such is the fate of satire: however strong you make it, there will always be people who like it spicier still—who barely notice that it was meant to be satire in the first place.

Consider Ellis's book, for instance: damned before it hit the stores, and all but flattened by the charge of pathological misogyny. Readers—men and women alike—seemed unsure whether to be numbed by the outrages committed in the text or outraged by the nullity of the telling. Now, at a distance, the book reads better than it did; it feels lit with a kind of cold hellfire, and Ellis has become our most assiduous tour guide—more solid than the excitable Tom Wolfe—to the netherworld of the nineteen-eighties. In fact, given the formations of excess that have since encrusted New York, he must be wondering, as satirists since Juvenal have wondered, whether he went far enough. The urge expressed by his hero, Patrick Bateman, to see the streets cleansed of low life is now civic policy; the means may be less fanatical, but Bateman, who extends zero tolerance into every crevice of his existence, would surely look on with approval. As for designer labels, the furor has spread like a rash; not even Bateman could have prophesied the second coming of Gucci.

So how do you pin the madness onto a screen? The first task is to hire a woman director; no man, I think, would be safe with this material. It lay for a while in the hands of Oliver Stone; he had replaced Mary Harron, who subsequently returned to the project. Let us give thanks for this merciful escape. Stone's choice of leading man for Bateman—murderer, moneymaker, and galloping clotheshorse—was Leonardo DiCaprio, who is good at victims but too sweet for the practice of monstrosity. Harron went with Christian Bale—a Brit, though you wouldn't know it. His accent is as perfect as his pectorals, and his face is smooth and carved, almost sanded; that it gives so little away is proof not of hidden depths but of open shallows—there really is nothing to give. Near the start of the movie, Patrick takes us through his cleansing routine, itemizing his lotions and potions, and finally peeling away his exfoliating mask—a rubberized visor, ideal for the urban hoplite—to reveal the harder mask of his good looks. At the same time, he speaks in voice-over, explaining his drastic want of personality: "There is no real me." This is true, but I wish that Harron had trusted the grip of the image. The guy is shiny enough as it is; he needs no further gloss.

Elsewhere, thankfully, the gleam of the picture does the trick. Harron and her director of photography, Andrzej Sekula, have developed a weird plasticity for their creations; when Patrick and his cronies sit around with drinks, the light bounces off them as if they were mannequins, or cutouts from a magazine. Even their hair has a mirrored, Deco sleekness; they could be the natty fall guys who roamed the comedies of the nineteen-thirties, and you sense, in their casual putdowns of women and Jews, the vengeful bite of talentless men who have suddenly seen their chance. Bateman is not a freak; he is a type taken to the limit, and, if his story did not offend us, then Ellis and Harron would not be doing their job. Satire demands that you hold your nerve; the hydrochloric horror of "A Modest Proposal," in which Swift counselled the eating of children as a cure for famine, relied on his playing the joke straight, and the film of "American Psycho" is right not to pause for contemplation. The reductio ad absurdum of a mind that knows nothing save money is a desire to treat your fellow-citizens as commodities—things to be named, consumed, and then expelled as trash. "I'm into murders and executions," Bateman tells a blond woman in a club. "Most people who work in mergers and acquisitions don't really like it," she replies. Did she miss what he said, above the music, or did she get him all too well?

What Patrick does to earn his keep

remains a mystery; at the office, he plugs wearily into his Walkman and makes dinner plans. He never stays late, and the film is itself too cool and lofty to inspect the work ethic that was one of the more enduring manias of the period. There is little plot here, no highs and lows; events descend calmly toward the uncontrolled. With a few swings of a chrome-plated axe, Bateman slaughters a friend named Paul Allen (Jared Leto) and takes over his apartment. There is no hint of a Ripley complex; Patrick simply needs a place where he can kill in peace. Were the movie to follow the mayhem of the novel in any detail, it would be unwatchable, but Mary Harron wants us to watch; we see the fallout of violence, and we catch the stink of approaching violence in the air, yet there is little actual violence to make us look away. As a result, the film, less savage than the book, is much creepier; when Bateman stands behind his assistant, Jean (Chloë Sevigny), with a nail gun pointed at her head, the whole cinema moans in fear. He doesn't do anything, though, and the scene winds up with a devastating string of double-entendres: "I don't think I can control myself," he says. "If you stay, something bad will happen. . . . You don't want to get hurt, do you?" Jean has no inkling of his designs; to her, these phrases ring with the panic of the obsequious admirer.

I was left uneasy by the casting of the women; Harron has filled the film with faces that are dangerously bare of expression—look at Cara Seymour, playing a hooker named Christie, or, indeed, at Sevigny herself. Even actresses as forceful as Reese Witherspoon and Samantha Mathis, as Bateman's fiancée and mistress, respectively, are seldom allowed off the leash. I can see the reasoning here; through Bateman's pitiless eyes, women have no character worth preserving. Or perhaps a larger feminist argument is at work; with men like Bateman around, no wonder women shut down their emotions. For all this, I wanted someone to fight back, to show a contrary spirit, if only to stop the movie from shrinking into Patrick's dramatic monologue. That is why the best moment comes when he returns to Paul's apartment, and finds the blood wiped off the walls, the bathtubs emptied of flesh, and a real-estate agent showing clients around. "I think you should go now," she says. The question of what she knows is left beautifully suspended, and we realize that in the frenzy of the New York property market it might well be easier to cleanse your apartment of abomination and make a quick sell than to bother the authorities and see the value drop.

In the final twenty minutes, "American Psycho" is turned on its head. Bateman begins to self-destruct; Bale cracks up convincingly, but it dulls the razored edge of the film to find its Marlovian hero recast as a nutcase. I believed in him more as a cyborg, at least fifty-per-cent machine, than as a damaged man, shedding real tears; the notion that his private abattoir was no worse than a dirty dream may be a nice twist of the narrative, but if writers or movie directors identify a malignancy—a psychosis at large in the world, not merely inside a single brain—they should pursue it to the death. Still, "American Psycho" is a fierce and timely piece of work, a bad brother to "American Beauty." Like Sam Mendes's film, it makes you laugh in ways, and at times, that should hardly be funny at all. The Reagan-era trappings—the noisome rococo of nouvelle cuisine, the early cell phones as long as a shoe, and the rise of Phil Collins—are fair game, but that is just the start. When I saw the picture, the audience whooped with glee as Bateman, in mid-murder, discoursed eloquently on the significance of Huey Lewis and the News; it was as if musical taste this dire should be read as mitigating circumstance. How did we get to such a stage? When did the faculty of irony become so refined, and so rapacious, that all human transgression, even on the borders of inhumanity, could be corralled into the comic? Personally, I blame the eighties. ♦

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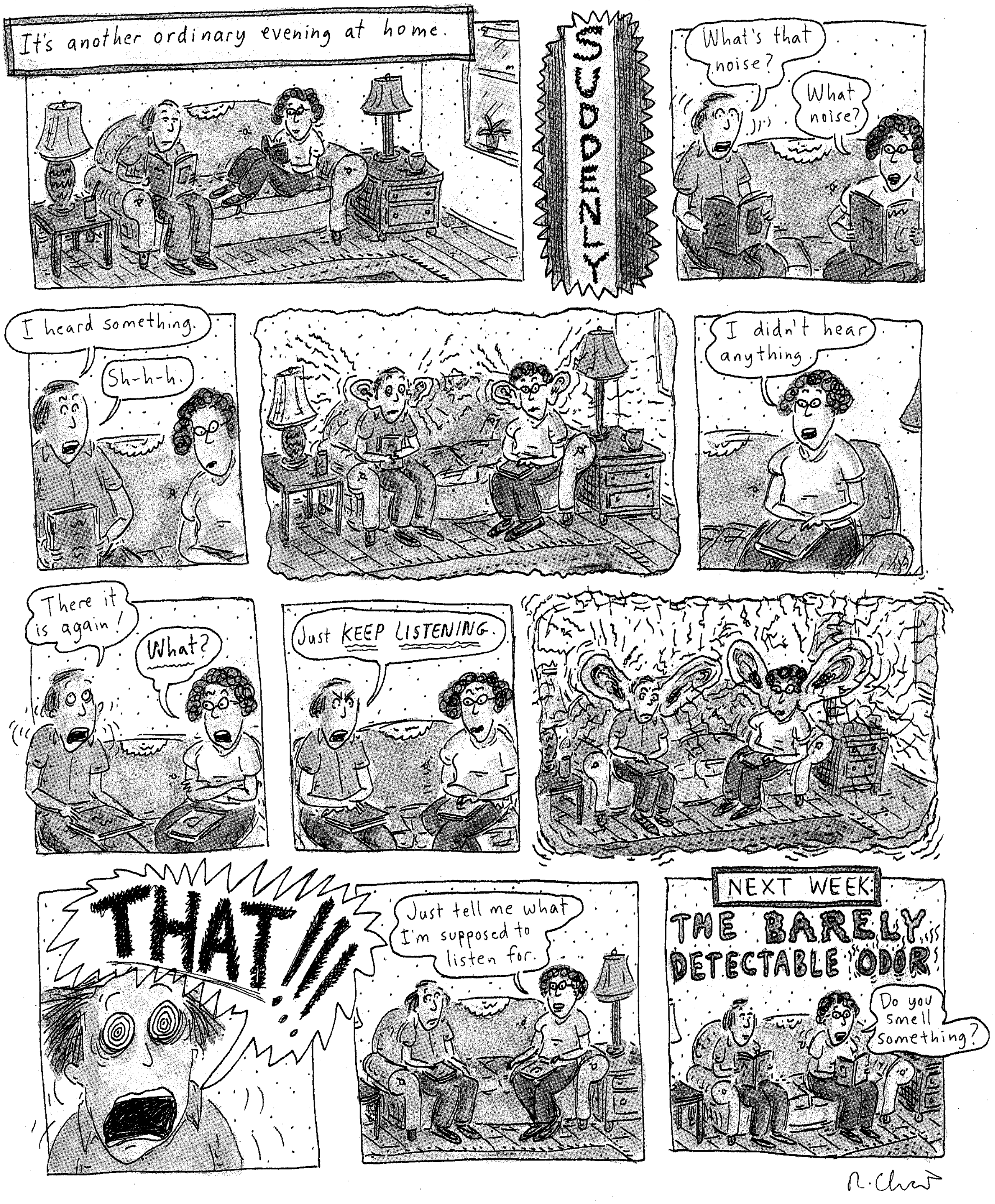
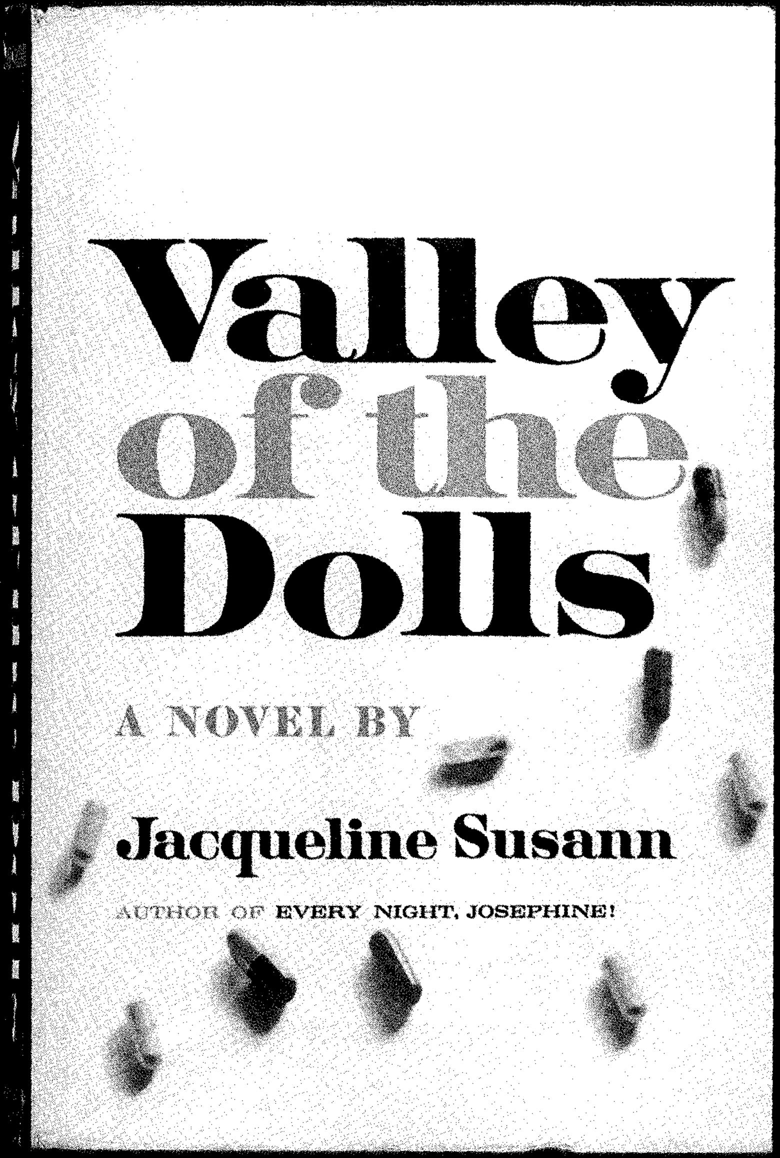
THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY


It's another ordinary evening at home.
SUDDENLY
What's that noise?
What noise?
I heard something.
Sh-h-h.
I didn't hear anything.
There it is again!
What?
Just KEEP LISTENING.
THAT!!!
Just tell me what I'm supposed to listen for.
NEXT WEEK:
THE BARELY DETECTABLE ODOR
Do you smell something?
R. Chast

Nov. 28, 1970. Confiscated while passing to girlfriend in study hall.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